

THE STRAITS TIMES

Top of the News
The 71 million-\$ HDB flats sold last year A3



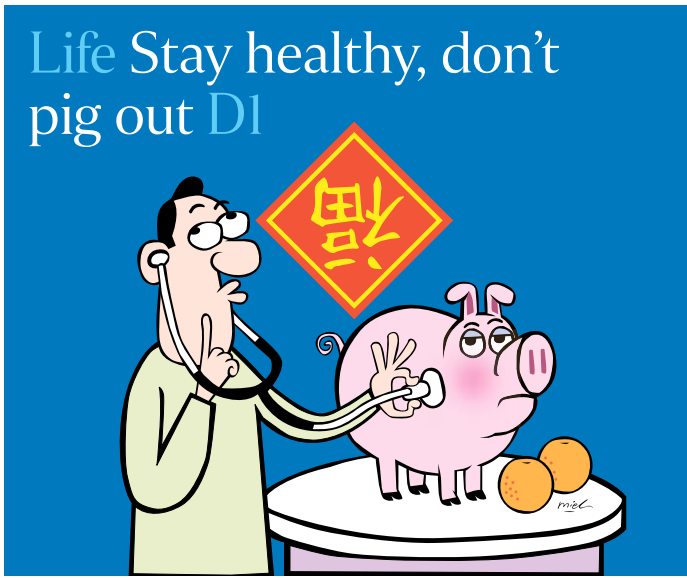
Home
A community garden to call their own B4&5



Home Warming
Arctic's impact on the tropics B2&3



Life Stay healthy, don't pig out D1



Integration makes Singapore Chinese identity distinct: PM

Chinese Singaporeans different from Chinese elsewhere as they're part of multiracial whole

Royston Sim
Deputy News Editor (Politics)

Chinese Singaporeans have integrated into a larger, multiracial whole, and become distinct from Chinese communities elsewhere, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

In his annual Chinese New Year message, PM Lee highlighted how this integration differentiates Singapore Chinese from the Chinese societies of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese minorities in

South-east Asia and the West.

But identity, like tradition, is dynamic, he noted.

The Singapore Chinese identity will continue to evolve as new immigrants join and new generations come of age, he said, adding that they will enrich Singapore's cultural heritage with their different life experiences and perspectives.

At the same time, he expressed his hope that the new arrivals will adjust their social norms to the local context and embrace uniquely Singaporean cultural habits over time, just as earlier generations did.

"This is the way for the Chinese

community to stay vibrant, and for Singapore to be open, dynamic and resilient for many years to come," PM Lee said.

The Prime Minister recounted in his message how Chinese immigrants who made Singapore their home had developed their own unique rituals and traditions, which were passed down the generations.

"The way we celebrate Chinese New Year reflects how the Singapore Chinese identity has evolved and emerged over the years."

Noting that Singapore is commemorating its bicentenary this year, PM Lee said the arrival of Stamford Raffles 200 years ago marked a crucial turning point in the country's history, including for the Chinese community.

This was because large-scale im-

migration started only after Raffles established a free port here, with Chinese immigrants coming from as nearby as Malacca and as far away as Canton, Swatow and Amoy to seek their fortunes.

Many immigrants were too poor to travel back home for Chinese New Year, and instead recreated whatever traditions they could when celebrating here, PM Lee said.

This included eating auspicious food, performing lion dances for good fortune, and setting off firecrackers to drive away evil spirits.

Today, Singapore Chinese do lo hei – tossing raw fish salad – to express their hopes and wishes for the coming year, he said.

When visiting friends and relatives, they also enjoy pineapple tarts, kueh lapis spekkoek and

kueh bangkit cookies – a reflection of the South-east Asian heritage of the Straits Chinese, he added.

Singapore banned the use of firecrackers in 1972, because of the danger they posed. Chingay parades were held from 1973 to kindle the festive mood in their place.

While the first few parades featured mainly Chinese cultural items such as lion and dragon dances, PM Lee said Chingay has since grown into a celebration for people of all races and ages.

He cited Chinese lion dancers performing alongside Indian dance troupes and Malay children playing the kompang, a traditional drum-like instrument. Groups from countries such as Japan, Russia and China come to participate as well.

The involvement of all races adds a special joy and richness to the festivities, PM Lee said, and reflects Singapore's unique multicultural society.

"We see this happening also when the Chinese join in Hari Raya celebrations with our Muslim friends, and Deepavali festivities with our Hindu friends," he added.

PM Lee wished all Singaporeans a Happy Chinese New Year.

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Beijing speeds up legislation to ease trade row

China is accelerating plans to introduce a new foreign investment law that will tackle some of the key sources of friction with the United States by banning forced technology transfers and better protecting intellectual property rights.

The National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp Parliament, will vote on the new law, which will replace three existing laws, during a session scheduled to open on March 5, the official Xinhua news agency said. It is sure to be approved.

The speed with which China is enacting the law – Beijing will do in three months what usually takes at least a year – underscores Chinese President Xi Jinping's eagerness to reach a deal with the US.

The National People's Congress Standing Committee is reviewing an updated version of the legislation, according to Xinhua.

But that text has not yet been made public, leaving foreign investors uncertain of the extent of the changes made since the end of December.

Based on the most recent publicly available text, the law may fall short of what is needed to defuse the Trump administration's concerns, according to some US experts.

Businesses have also raised fears that the time to review and raise objections on such a crucial piece of legislation has been cut short.

Riot of colours at River Hongbao launch

Fireworks lit up the Marina Bay skyline last night at the launch of this year's River Hongbao, which is one of the first major events of the year kicking off Singapore's bicentennial commemoration.

The 10-minute fireworks display was the longest in the event's 33-year history.

It was put up by award-winning teams from Australia, China, Italy and the United States, which have done it over global icons such as San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge and the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Launched by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong last night, the event runs till Sunday and is expected to draw more than a million people to The Float @ Marina Bay. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR



SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A5



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WATCH FEATURED SUBJECT TO STOCK AVAILABILITY

10 must-reads for today

1 Looking for a franchisee

The owner of Nam Seng Noodles & Fried Rice at Far East Square is looking to franchise out her business, which is best known for its traditional wonton noodles. Madam Leong Yuet Meng, 90, started the stall in 1962 and is still the driving force behind it. **LIFE D5**



Madam Leong Yuet Meng, owner of Nam Seng Noodles & Fried Rice, giving her staff instructions on how to prepare a customer's order. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

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VIDEO

Pig-themed yusheng

To fit the Year of the Pig theme, ST Food online editor Hedy Khoo uses bak kwa, crispy bak kwa, pork floss, pork crackling and prosciutto ham to assemble her festive salad – complete with a pig motif and a picket fence fashioned from bak kwa. <http://str.sg/diy-yusheng>

2 S'pore Chinese are distinct

In his annual Chinese New Year message, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said Chinese Singaporeans have integrated into a larger, multiracial whole which differentiates them from Chinese societies in other parts of the world. But this Singapore Chinese identity is dynamic and will continue to evolve, he added. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

4 Nissan scraps UK car plans

Nissan has scrapped plans to build its new sport utility vehicle in Britain, warning two months before Brexit that uncertainty was making it harder to plan for the future. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Theresa May said she would seek a “pragmatic” Brexit deal that could win over both the European Union and her own lawmakers. **WORLD A8**

6 How Mid-East is shaping up

With the United States' exit from Syria, the coast is clear for other powers to take up the slack in the Middle East – and what is emerging are proxy wars, says global affairs correspondent Jonathan Eyal (below). **OPINION A15**



7 Bike-sharing model in doubt

Half of the operators who got licences to run dockless bike-sharing operations have failed to take off, calling into question the long-term viability of the industry. Only Mobike, SG Bike and Anywheel are in business, but experts say a sustainable business model has yet to be found. **HOME B1**

8 Free tour of Queenstown

A free guided tour of the Dawson and Queenstown areas will tell more about Singapore's colonial roots and early history. Conducted on the first weekend of each month, it will take participants to places such as the Tanglin barracks, Chatsworth Park and Phoenix Park. **HOME B6**



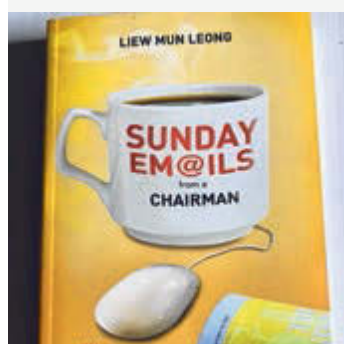
On the tour, participants will visit sites such as St George's Church in Harding Road. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

9 Expect market volatility

With trade tensions and other geopolitical risks continuing to weigh on sentiment, market volatility should still be expected this week, regardless of the light economic calendar. **BUSINESS C2**

10 Sports Hub model workable

Despite a series of high-profile issues at the Singapore Sports Hub since its 2014 opening, industry experts say the public-private partnership is still workable. But all parties need to agree on how to align and balance often-conflicting objectives. **SPORT C8 & 9**



VIDEO

Beating fear of failure

Changi Airport Group chairman Liew Mun Leong talks about repeating his Primary 6 education, his proudest achievement and his Sunday Em@ils From A Chairman book series. <http://str.sg/LiewMunLeong>

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Million-dollar HDB flats: Location, type and size count

Majority sold last year were five-room or larger, in central locations; rare flat types also coveted

Rachel Au-Yong
Housing Correspondent

Last year, Ms Casslyn Lim, 41, sold not one but two Housing Board flats for over \$1 million.

It was the first time she had sold such high-priced HDB flats in her nine years as a property agent.

In any case, she was not the only agent to have done so. Last year, 71 HDB flats were sold for \$1 million and more – the highest to date.

In contrast, there were two such transactions in 2014 and 46 in 2017.

The overwhelming majority of last year's million-dollar deals – 62 units – were five-room or larger flats.

The unit farthest west that was sold last year is a five-room unit at Block 441A Clementi Avenue 3, just above Clementi MRT station, while the easternmost unit is an executive maisonette in Hougang.

Otherwise, the rest are in fairly central locations, with most of them clustered around the Central Area (18 units), Queenstown (12 units) and Bishan (12 units).

Besides size and location, another factor for the high prices is the rarity of the flat types. These include 22 units under the now-defunct Design, Build and Sell Scheme (DBSS), which is public housing designed with condo-like finishings; 18 units at the Pinnacle@Duxton, an award-winning public housing estate in the heart of the Central Business Dis-

trict; and one terraced house in Jalan Bahagia, a three-room flat type that ceased to be built after the 1970s.

Apart from the record-breaking number of such expensive transactions, last year was notable for being the first time normal four-roomers crossed the million-dollar mark.

All four such units belong to a four-block Boon Tiong Road cluster in the Tiong Bahru area.

Ms Lim, a realtor with ERA Realty, sold one of them. Her other million-dollar flat was a five-roomer from the same cluster. She was not surprised her four-roomer crossed the million-dollar mark: "The view is good, the floor is high, and the location is ideal for those who want to live here or buy and rent out later."

While the million-dollar flats formed but a fraction of the 23,099 transactions last year, observers expect the number to grow this year.

OrangeTee & Tie research head Christine Sun pointed out that there are almost 4,000 flats in mature, central towns such as Queenstown, Bukit Merah and Ang Mo Kio reaching the minimum occupation period of five years this year.

But she also emphasised that million-dollar units are not the norm.

"There are still attractively priced resale units that young couples can consider. Perhaps some may have slightly shorter leases, but they will still have good attributes like their location or lovely views," she said.

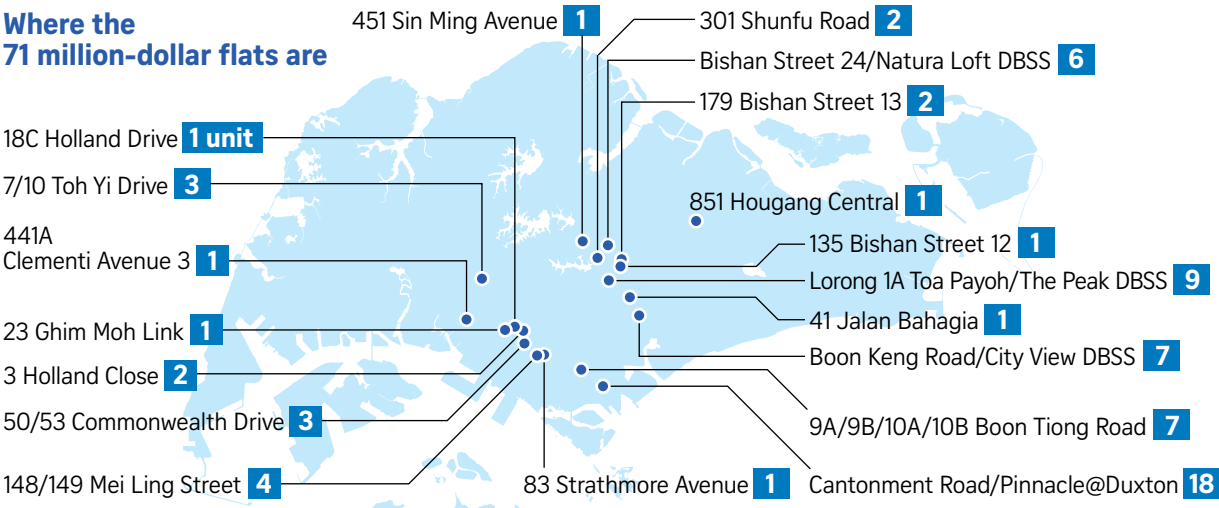
Ultimately, flat prices are deter-



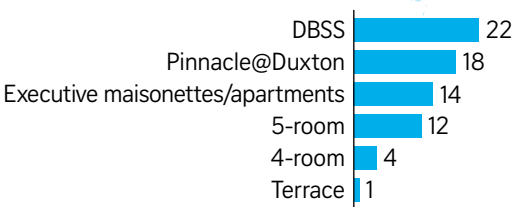
Property agent Casslyn Lim sold a four-room flat and a five-room unit at a cluster of HDB blocks in Boon Tiong Road (left), in the Tiong Bahru area, for over a million dollars each last year. While noting that million-dollar flats are not the norm, observers expect their numbers to grow, with more flats in mature, central towns reaching the minimum occupation period of five years this year. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

Million-dollar flats

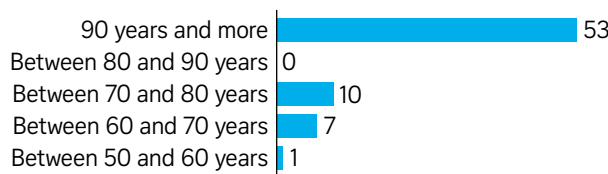
Where the 71 million-dollar flats are



Million-dollar HDB flats by type



Million-dollar flats by number of years left on the lease



Sources: DATA.GOV.SG AND ORANGETEE & TIE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

mined by their usage value, lease length and the time value of money, said Nominated MP and economist Walter Theseira.

"Whether or not they are Housing Board flats or condominiums is irrelevant. If you have expensive HDB flats, they tend to be in central locations or close to the MRT, so their implied rent is very high."

However, he acknowledged that centrally located properties are much more valuable than those in other parts of Singapore, and noted that most lower-middle income families would not be able to afford them.

"Without some massive restructuring of economic activities in Singapore, homes around the Central Business District will continue to have high valuations," he said.

As HDB leases in mature, central towns start to expire and they get redeveloped, he suggested different ownership structures to ensure that Singaporeans from all walks of life can live in all parts of the country.

These include shorter leases for new HDB flats in a central location, or a scheme where part of the capital gains goes back to the authorities.

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Hotel occupancy rate in 2018 highest since 2012

More tourist arrivals, slowdown in supply of new rooms lift figure

Joyce Lim
Senior Correspondent

The phrase “no room at the inn” has never seemed more apt, with hotels in Singapore packed to the gills these days.

The market started to pick up speed in 2017 after four stagnant years but really hit high gear last year on the back of more tourist arrivals and a slowdown in new rooms coming on stream.

That sent occupancy rate to 83.7 per cent last year, said global data and benchmarking firm STR, up from 81.2 per cent in 2017 and the highest since 2012.

Keeping supply and demand in balance is notoriously hard in the fickle hospitality industry, as experts note.

“(The) new-hotels pipeline is never really wonderfully and perfectly aligned with demand and the reality of tourism; one quarter will be worse than another,” said STR’s

regional director Jesper Palmqvist.

“Most people in the industry will agree that this influx of new rooms was needed in the long term and will keep pushing the country to remain attractive to visitors and cater for events.

“Eventually it was absorbed by new demand and during the 2018 cycle. Occupancy was up as arrival numbers continued to pick up.”

Industry observers attributed the rise in demand partly to the Singapore Tourism Board’s (STB) “Passion Made Possible” campaign, which was launched in August 2017.

There were other lures last year as well with plenty of MICE events – Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions – as well as the Trump-Kim meeting and World Cities Summit, said Dr Lee Nai Jia, Knight Frank’s senior director and research head.

There has also been greater awareness of Singapore as a tourist attraction through movies like Crazy Rich Asians, added Dr Lee.

Visitor arrivals hit 16.9 million in the January to November period last year, up 6.61 per cent on the same period in 2017, with a record

83.7%

Occupancy rates last year, the highest since 2012.

81.2%

Occupancy rates in 2017.

number of 1.73 million in July alone.

China, Indonesia and India remain the biggest sources of visitors. About 1.7 million Chinese came here in the first half of last year and spent around \$2 billion. Indonesia is the second largest market with about three million visitors a year.

The squeeze on rooms is so acute that some tourists are resorting to staying in Johor Baru and crossing

the Causeway every day.

K&C Han Sing Travel managing director Florence Chen added that more South Korean visitors are staying in hotels in JB because of the commencement of flights from Seoul to Senai International Airport by JinAir.

As JinAir flights land at about 1am, South Korean tourists will stay in JB for a night and make a day tour to Singapore the following day, said Ms Chen, who specialises in tours to Singapore for South Korean visitors.

Senai International Airport’s passenger traffic rose 13 per cent to 3.52 million last year, mainly due to the introduction of new routes such as the one by JinAir.

STB statistics show South Korean visitor numbers fell 0.11 per cent from January to November year on year.

Hotels in Johor Baru have become more attractive with the stronger Singapore dollar, said Hong Thai Travel assistant general manager Tony Au.

“The cost of a one-night stay in a hotel in Singapore is equivalent to three nights in JB,” he noted.

“Some people would also prefer to stay in a five-star hotel in JB over

a mid-tier hotel in Singapore for the same price.”

However, Mr Palmqvist said the concern for hoteliers is not about the occupancy, but the average daily room rate.

Despite an increase in demand, the average daily rate (ADR) has remained low and that makes a difference to the bottom line, said Mr Palmqvist.

Mr Tony Cousens, general manager of the Ramada & Days Hotels by Wyndham Singapore, said: “ADR has remained low for the last three to four years because of the new hotel supply on the market. There have been a lot of discounting and promotional offers. It is a challenge for hoteliers to improve the rates yet offer a good experience for guests.”

Cushman & Wakefield expects the supply pipeline to taper in the next few years. It estimates an average of 764 extra rooms a year to come on stream from 2018 to 2022, sharply down from 3,357 annually between 2014 and 2017.

Dr Lee expects occupancy growth to slow down this year.

The slowdown may not be due to too much supply, he said.

“The recent sales of hotel sites will take time to come on stream and may not be able to meet demand,” said Dr Lee.

“Hence the rates are expected to increase and divert tourist arrivals, especially if the Singapore currency remains strong.”

Mr Cousens said he is confident that the opening of Jewel Changi Airport this year will continue to drive visitor growth and hotel demand.

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Tourists with lower budgets opt for chalets

Irishman Niall McCormack was looking for an affordable travel destination with beaches and his online searches led him to NTUC Club’s D’Resort, a stone’s throw from Pasir Ris Park and beach.

It may not quite be an Orchard Road hotel but tourists from countries such as Ireland, Australia and China are staying at chalets in out-of-town areas like Pasir Ris.

D’Resort @ Downtown East, with its waterpark attraction, seems to be pulling in the most tourists.

When The Straits Times visited D’Resort last month, our reporter met visitors from France, Ireland, Vietnam, the Philippines, China and Australia.

It was Filipina Claire Bauto’s first visit to Singapore. The 49-year-old housewife paid \$155 for a room with two queen-size beds.

“Five of us slept in a room,” said Ms Bauto, who came here with nine other friends and relatives.

“The resort is nice. We took the public bus to Pasir Ris MRT station and took the train to Orchard Road. We also went to Sentosa. We didn’t mind the distance.”

But some visitors felt it was too far to travel to the city centre.

Visiting Singapore for the first time with her family, Australian teen Susan Frayne, 16, said: “I have heard about Orchard Road, but I didn’t have enough time to go. We went to the nearby Elias Mall.

“The waterpark at D’Resort drew us to stay here. It was also affordable as my family of four could stay in the same room.”

Mr McCormack, 29, who came to Singapore with his Vietnamese fiancée, was impressed with his big chalet unit, which cost \$110 a night. But he was disappointed with how small Pasir Ris beach is.

“It’s nothing like what we saw in the photos. We don’t even feel like lying on the sand,” said the teacher, who is based in Vietnam.

While it may be good to let tourists see a different side of Singapore, some Singaporeans The Straits Times spoke to raised the question of why the resort – which was set up primarily for NTUC members and workers of Singapore – is catering to tourists.

D’Resort @ Downtown East was officially opened to the public in 2015 with 387 rooms as part of a \$200 million project to refurbish Downtown East.

It is listed on sites such as Agoda, Booking.com and Expedia.

Car dealer Joey Tan, 37, said: “The price per room may be cheap to tourists who compare it with hotels in the city, but for locals, especially low- and middle-income families, it is quite a high price to pay.



“I would book once to twice a year, mostly to celebrate the birthdays of my wife and children.”

Mr Tan is also concerned that the rising demand from tourists may push up room prices.

Bank officer Ong Lingling, 48, said: “Chalets are good alternatives for those who don’t go for overseas holidays. They should be reserved for locals.”

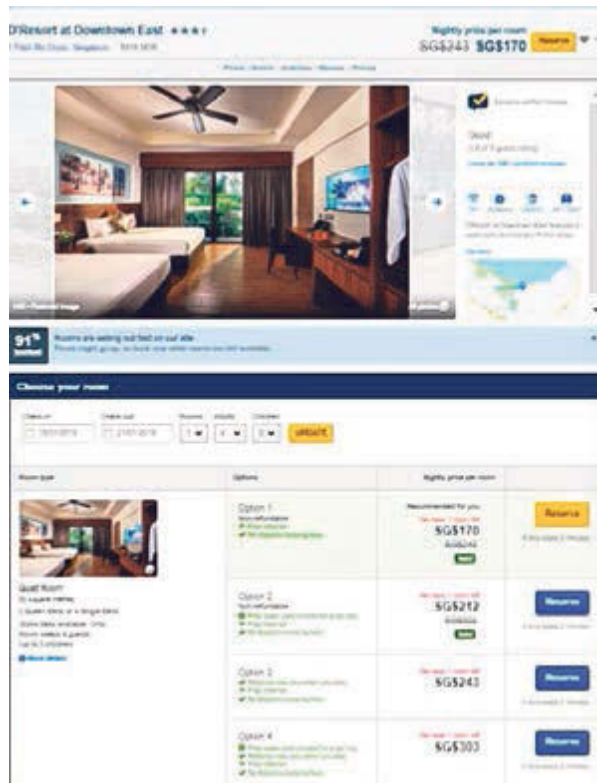
Mr Jake Tan, 29, a designer who spent two nights with his wife at D’Resort, felt it was unusual to see so many tourists at the chalets, but added: “I don’t mind as long as they are not disruptive.”

Despite the resort’s rising popularity with tourists, NTUC Club’s director of integrated water park resort, Mr Henry Cheah, said NTUC members and Singaporeans still make up about 80 per cent of school holiday and peak period stays.

“In fact, over 70 per cent of these rooms were booked by members three to six months in advance. The rest of the rooms are usually filled up by tourists,” said Mr Cheah, adding that its Park View rooms are exclusively for members.

It is only during off-peak times that the resort works with travel agents to bring in overseas tourists.

“Our off-peak seasons are usually the peak travel period for tourists from Asian countries, which enables us to optimise our room occupancy,” said Mr Cheah.



Above: D’Resort @ Downtown East, with its waterpark attraction, seems to be pulling in the most tourists. NTUC members and Singaporeans still make up about 80 per cent of school holiday and peak period stays, says NTUC Club’s director of integrated water park resort, Mr Henry Cheah. Left: Rooms at D’Resort are listed on sites such as Expedia, Agoda and Booking.com. PHOTOS: ALPHONSUS CHERN, EXPEDIA

Mr Tony Au, assistant general manager of Hong Thai Travel, said that despite its distance from the city centre, D’Resort offers good value for money and he has had large student groups from Hong Kong and Thailand staying at the chalets.

“Each chalet unit can accommo-

date four people and each person pays about \$25. A twin-sharing room in a lowest-class hotel costs about \$80. If you multiply that by five to seven nights, that’s quite a lot of savings for the students to stay at D’Resort,” said Mr Au.

The Civil Service Club, which has two chalet facilities in Changi, offers

priority bookings to its members a few months before bookings open to the public, according to Changi Clubhouse director Peter Chew.

“During the off-peak period, chalets are offered as part of the Stay, Meet and Play package for corporate retreats,” said Mr Chew.

“Occasionally, when the hotels around us face an overbooked situation, our rooms, if available, do come in handy. We have a close collaboration with them to meet each other’s needs; likewise when the Clubhouse requires more rooms.”

A National Service Resort & Country Club spokesman said its members get to book its bungalows one month before the bookings open to the public. Generally, fewer than 5 per cent of the 40 units are booked by non-members as the bungalows, located on Changi Coast Walk, are popular with members.

NTUC deputy secretary-general Heng Chee How does not see any issue with D’Resort catering to tourists.

He said: “It is right for NTUC Club management to emphasise that its facilities are prioritised for union members, workers and their families.

“Other users beyond this group can help take up the slack, so that the facilities are overall better utilised, and it is more sustainable.”

Joyce Lim

DISTANCE NOT AN ISSUE

The resort is nice. We took the public bus to Pasir Ris MRT station and took the train to Orchard Road. We also went to Sentosa. We didn’t mind the distance.



FILIPINA CLAIRE BAUTO, who stayed at D’Resort @ Downtown East.

AFFORDABLE ROOMS

The waterpark at D’Resort drew us to stay here. It was also affordable as my family of four could stay in the same room.



AUSTRALIAN TEEN SUSAN FRAYNE

Foreign firms worry as China fast-tracks investment law

They say draft Bill's language leaves room for broad interpretation

RUSHED BECAUSE OF TRADE SPAT

What we feel with this piece of legislation is that it's been squeezed between the normal legal process and the negotiation table (to defuse) the trade conflict. In our view this is a little unfortunate because this is an important piece of legislation that will have an effect... on all foreign companies.



MR MATS HARBORN, president of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China.

BEIJING • China is fast-tracking a foreign investment law at an unprecedented pace to meet the United States' demands on trade, but businesses fear that the time to review and raise objections on a crucial piece of legislation has been cut short.

The law will eliminate the requirement for foreign enterprises to transfer proprietary technology to Chinese joint-venture partners. It also includes other steps to level the business playing field that Western trading partners have long demanded.

China's Parliament is expected to vote on the legislation next month – barely two months after debating a first draft.

"It is indeed unprecedented that the Bill is being moved by the NPC (National People's Congress) at such a fast pace," said Mr Wang Jiangyu, an expert on Chinese law at the National University of Singapore. "Normally it would take one to three years for a Bill to be passed and signed into law."

Foreign businesses worry the draft glosses over details and that vague language leaves room for broad interpretation.

For example, it gives China the right to expropriate foreign investment "for the public interest",

which foreign business groups fear could be abused.

A draft law was first published for comment in 2015 but was quickly shelved until it resurfaced late last year, Mr Wang said.

It was submitted to China's rubber-stamp legislature for a first reading on Dec 23, and made available for public comment till Feb 24.

The top decision-making body of the legislature convened a special two-day session on Tuesday last week to debate another "updated version", state news agency Xinhua reported.

The law will probably be approved during Parliament's roughly 10-day annual session which opens on March 5, Mr Wang said.

The clock is ticking on a March 1 US-set deadline for China to address trade concerns and avert an escalation in their tariff war.

"What we feel with this piece of legislation is that it's been squeezed between the normal legal process and the negotiation table (to defuse) the trade conflict," the president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, Mr Mats Harborn, said.

"In our view this is a little unfortunate because this is an important piece of legislation that will have an effect... on all foreign companies."

Both the EU and American chambers of commerce in China said they rushed to submit feedback from members last week.

Although the legislation covers several pain points highlighted by US President Donald Trump, including safeguarding foreign capital from government "interference", it falls short in other key areas, the business lobbies said.

"The current draft law is high level and general" and requires more detailed guidelines and implementing measures, the American Chamber of Commerce in Beijing wrote in its feedback report.

The December version debated by lawmakers is considerably shorter – by over 130 fewer articles – than the previous 2015 draft.

A section describing how the government will scrutinise foreign investments for potential national security concerns is limited to two sentences in the December version – simply stating that China would establish a review process and that decisions would be made according to law.

The earlier version had a beefy five-page chapter detailing how companies could appeal against security rulings, plus examples of factors that could trigger a security review, said Mr Jacob Parker, vice-president of China operations at the US-China Business Council.

But the latest draft stipulates that all national security review decisions are final, implying no administrative or legal appeals are possible.

Both the EU and American trade chambers are also urging China to consider having a single Company Law to govern both foreign and domestic enterprises, as is common in many countries.

"It's now time to make sure that all companies are seen as making the same positive contribution to China when it comes to growth, employment, taxes, R&D and so on. There shouldn't be a distinction based on where the investment comes from," Mr Harborn said. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono (far left) meeting his South Korean counterpart Kang Kyung-wha (far right) on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland, last month. The feud between both countries is beginning to damage economic and military relations between the neighbours. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Japan-S. Korea feud deepens as Trump sits on the sidelines

TOKYO • United States President Donald Trump's desire to put "America first" has fostered new disputes between the US and its allies.

In Asia, old rivalries are also roaring back. Ties between Japan and South Korea – two of the US' closest security partners – have arguably turned their most hostile in more than half a century over a series of diplomatic disputes.

Now, there are signs that the feud, fuelled by disagreements over Japan's colonisation of the Korean peninsula decades ago, is beginning to damage economic and military relations between the neighbours.

During previous nationalistic flare-ups, US administrations normally intervened to make sure such grudges do not spin out of control. Not any more.

The episode in North Asia illustrates how Mr Trump's scepticism of traditional US alliances and preoccupation with a rolling series of political crises in Washington may be quietly reshaping the post-

war geopolitical landscape.

While ties between Japan and South Korea run deep – each is the other's third-largest trading partner – they are laden with centuries of grievances, especially Tokyo's 1910-45 colonisation of the peninsula.

Disputes over whether Japan has sufficiently atoned for its actions returned to the fore after Mr Moon Jae-in won the South Korean presidency in 2017 and pushed back against Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's efforts to put the war disputes to rest.

Perhaps most consequential to the US is the deteriorating ties between the Japanese and South Korean militaries – something that could undermine American efforts to counter a rising China.

Both defence ministries have accused each other of endangering their personnel after Japan said a South Korean naval vessel used a weapons-targeting radar on one of its military planes in December.

Kyodo News and other media

LITTLE U.S. INTEREST

There's no leadership from above in the US administration to act in the way we have in the past. At moments like this, it's been the role of the US to sometimes quietly step in and help to restore communication, and sometimes to find solutions.



MR DANIEL SNEIDER, a Stanford University lecturer, on US President Donald Trump showing little interest in the Japan-South Korea alliance.

have said defence exchanges are being postponed, increasing the potential for misunderstanding during unplanned encounters.

But neither Mr Abe nor Mr Moon has much domestic incentive to settle, with nationalist sentiments running high.

In the past, the US has used its leverage as chief security guarantor to keep the rivalry in check, helping to broker their 1965 treaty, despite domestic opposition on both sides.

Mr Trump, however, has shown little interest in the alliance since abandoning his military pressure campaign against North Korea last year, focusing instead on US trade deficits and military expenditures with both countries.

The US leader skipped a pair of Asian summits in November to focus on the midterm elections and did not hold a trilateral meeting with Mr Abe and Mr Moon at the subsequent Group of 20 gathering in Argentina.

"There's no leadership from above in the US administration to act in the way we have in the past," said Mr Daniel Snider, a lecturer in international policy at Stanford University. "At moments like this, it's been the role of the US to sometimes quietly step in and help to restore communication, and sometimes to find solutions." BLOOMBERG

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Visitors enjoying the fireworks display at the launch of River Hongbao 2019 last night. The giant junk boat replica houses an exhibition, "A Harbour And Home: The Singapore River Through Time", which highlights the Singapore River's transformation over the years. ST PHOTOS: ARIFFIN JAMAR

River Hongbao kicks off with fireworks galore

Display lasting 10 minutes the longest in event's history; this year's festivities one of the major events to mark bicentenary

Fabian Koh

This year's River Hongbao kicked off last night with a 10-minute fireworks display, the longest in the event's history.

A mainstay on Singapore's calendar of Chinese New Year festivities since 1987, this year's edition is one of the first major events of the year to commemorate the Singapore Bicentennial. The event was launched by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at The Float @ Marina Bay.

It featured a special 10-minute fireworks display at 10pm, on top of one-minute-long displays at 8pm and 9pm. About 120,000 people attended the event last night.

Last year's River Hongbao had nightly fireworks displays each lasting about three minutes.

The special displays, which will also take place today, Saturday and Sunday, are by award-winning teams from Australia, China, Italy and the United States.

These teams have performed at global icons such as San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge and the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and at major international events such as the Beijing and London Olympics.

Realtor Vienson Tan, 48, was at the event with his girlfriend and her parents for the second year running. They were especially excited to catch the fireworks and soak in the festive atmosphere.

Towering over the floating platform is an 18m-tall God of Fortune, which showered visitors with luck and fortune, in the form of gold flakes. "After standing underneath the falling gold flakes, I'm definitely going to buy 4D," Mr Tan quipped.

Before pressing a button which lit up all the lanterns and exhibits simultaneously, PM Lee wished Singaporeans good health and a prosperous new year in Mandarin.

The River Hongbao features 22 lanterns, including the 12 Chinese zodiac animals, that light up the floating platform in myriad colours.

The largest lantern set is "Our Garden, Our Home", which is 60m long and 10m tall. It depicts events in Singapore's history, from Sang Nila Utama naming the island Singapura, or Lion City, to Singapore's growth as a transportation hub.

Dr Hari Yuvaraj, 28, attended the River Hongbao with his parents and cousins for the first time. "I know which year I was born in, so I went to check out my zodiac. Found out that I'm a horse, so it's going to be a good year in terms of wealth and health," he said.

Visitors can also view an exhibition located within a gigantic junk boat replica, "A Harbour And Home: The Singapore River Through Time", highlighting the Singapore River's transformation over the years.

River Hongbao 2019 is open from 2pm to 11pm daily till Sunday. Opening hours will be extended to 1am tonight. Admission is free.

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Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Jurong GRC MP Ang Wei Neng (on the PM's right, in yellow) taking a selfie with visitors yesterday at the launch of River Hongbao 2019.



Towering over The Float @ Marina Bay is an 18m-tall God of Fortune. The River Hongbao features 22 lanterns, including the 12 Chinese zodiac animals, that light up the floating platform in a myriad of colours.

14 children fall ill after lunch at Toa Payoh pre-school

Tee Zhuo

The authorities are investigating after 14 children at a pre-school in Toa Payoh vomited and had diarrhoea after having their lunch on Friday.

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) and Ministry of Health (MOH) are investigating an outbreak of gastroenteritis at PCF Sparkletots @ Toa Payoh West-Balestier Block 45, said an AVA spokesman yesterday.

The spokesman added that as of Saturday, 14 children were reported to have developed symptoms of gastroenteritis.

A spokesman for the PAP Community Foundation (PCF), which manages the pre-school in question, said that about 40 children ate the same lunch, which was served at 11.15am.

The affected children, aged between three and six, started vomiting from about 3.30pm on Friday. None has been hospitalised.



An outbreak of gastroenteritis at PCF Sparkletots @ Toa Payoh West-Balestier Block 45 is being investigated by the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority and Ministry of Health. LIANHE ZAOBAO FILE PHOTO

PCF corporate affairs manager Samuel Ng told The Straits Times that parents of the children who became unwell were informed as soon as possible.

"We remain in close contact with the affected children's parents and will monitor the situation," he said.

Speaking to Chinese-language daily Lianhe Wanbao, a parent who did not wish to be named said he was informed about the incident at about 5pm on Friday. His daughter had vomited thrice by then.

"My daughter vomited five more times at the clinic and when she re-

turned home. The school should have contacted us immediately, and not waited two hours," he said.

Mr Ng explained that the Sparkletots centre in Toa Payoh West has been using a caterer since Nov 15 last year, after the in-house cook resigned.

PCF did not disclose the name of the caterer.

Mr Ng said that the matter has been reported to the Early Childhood Development Agency and MOH.

teezhuo@sph.com.sg

NOT INFORMED PROMPTLY

My daughter vomited five more times at the clinic and when she returned home. The school should have contacted us immediately, and not waited two hours.



A PARENT, who said he was informed about the incident at about 5pm. His daughter had vomited thrice by then.

Actor allegedly molested stewardess on S'pore flight

Timothy Goh

Taiwanese actor Tuo Chung-hua, a star of the popular movie series Yes, Sir!, was arrested after allegedly molesting a stewardess on a flight to Singapore.

The 56-year-old, whose name is also listed as To Tsung-hua, was on a China Airlines flight to Singapore last Friday when he began behaving in a drunken and disorderly manner, Taiwan's Apple Daily reported.

When a male passenger confronted him, he reportedly hurled vulgarities at him.

Afterwards, he allegedly touched a flight attendant's buttocks while asking her to bring him more alcohol.

Apple Daily reported that the stewardess later broke down and cried.

Mr Tuo's agent told the newspaper that the actor had wanted to celebrate Chinese New Year, and had spoken in a loud voice as he was "excited". The agent claimed that Mr Tuo had not molested the stewardess.

Mr Tuo later recorded a clip of himself apologising and uploaded it online. In the 50-second video, he acknowledged that he "may have done some things that affected other people" while on the flight, and explained that he had simply been very happy, as Chinese New Year was approaching.

He said in Mandarin: "I may have



Taiwanese actor Tuo Chung-hua, 56, was arrested when the China Airlines flight landed here and the police are investigating.

had a little too much to drink. This really was unacceptable. I hope it won't affect everybody's mood for the new year.

"I hereby apologise to those I have affected, I did not have any ill intention of harassing you all. I hope she can forgive me."

Apple Daily later reported that China Airlines confirmed a passenger was drunk on the flight, and that the captain had reported the situation to the authorities in Singapore for security reasons.

The police told The Straits Times yesterday that they were alerted to a case of outrage of modesty that took place at 6.57pm last Friday on board a flight bound for Singapore. The police arrested a 56-year-old man in relation to the case when the plane landed and are investigating the incident.

Mr Tuo, who has acted in acclaimed shows like Lust, Caution and Crystal Boys, won the Golden Bell Award in 2005 for his role in the TV series Love's Lone Flower.

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Soldiers keeping watch as investigators marked out evidence near body bags after blasts at a church in Jolo, Sulu province, on Mindanao island, recently. The leader of the Ajang-ajang faction of the Abu Sayyaf is suspected of helping to plot the attack, with help from Indonesian militants who had previously committed to becoming martyrs and travelled to the Philippines. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Crack Indonesian team to identify church bombers in Philippines

Indonesian couple suspected of being behind Jolo suicide attack

Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

A team from Indonesia's police Detachment 88 anti-terror squad was due to travel to the Philippines yesterday to help the local authorities identify the remains of two suspected Indonesian suicide bombers who carried out a church attack last Sunday that killed nearly two dozen people and wounded more than 100.

The Philippines' Interior Secretary Eduardo Ano said on Friday that an Indonesian couple were responsible for the twin blasts on Jolo island, south-west of Zamboanga. The man reportedly used an alias, Abu Huda.

A woman, wearing a crucifix, detonated a bomb inside the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and her male companion blew himself up outside minutes later, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte had said earlier.

"We are yet to find out what this Abu Huda's real identity is, and map out the networks he is connected with," said an Indonesian

government official who spoke to The Straits Times on condition of anonymity.

Ms Sidney Jones, director of the Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, cast doubt over claims that an Indonesian couple were behind the church bombings.

"There is no evidence! Different officials are saying different things – Malaysians, Yemenis, Indonesians. They actually have no clue," Ms Jones told The Jakarta Post on Saturday.

Last Sunday's attack has reignited fears of terrorism across the Philippines, prompting the beefing up of security in churches, commercial areas such as shopping malls, and other public places.

Security forces are chasing militants from the Ajang-ajang faction of the Abu Sayyaf, a small but brutal gang of self-styled Muslim militants founded in the 1990s with seed money from Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network.

The faction's leader, Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, is suspected of helping to plot the Jan 27 bombings, with help from Indonesian militants who had previously committed to becoming martyrs and travelled to Marawi, a southern city in the Philippines.

Militants attacked and seized central Marawi in 2017, battling the military for 154 days before the mili-

tary regained control. The city was liberated on Oct 17, 2017, following the death of Isnilon Hapilon, leader of the Abu Sayyaf terror group and the anointed emir of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in South-east Asia.

Militants, including foreign fighters, fled Marawi to other places in the Philippines, according to counter-terrorism researcher Ulta Levenia of the Jakarta-based Centre of Terrorism and Radicalism

Security forces are chasing militants from the Ajang-ajang faction of the Abu Sayyaf, a small but brutal gang of self-styled Muslim militants founded in the 1990s with seed money from Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network. The faction's leader, Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, is suspected of helping to plot the Jan 27 bombings.

Studies. She added that among the militants from Indonesia were many who are committed suicide bombers. They migrated to Mindanao from Indonesia after Detachment 88 started to launch intensive raids on them starting last year.

Figures from the Indonesian police showed that last year, Detachment 88 put 396 militants out of action, a record number and a sharp jump from the 176 in 2017. Twenty-five suspects were gunned down during raids last year as they resisted arrest, nine more than in 2017.

"It's like pressing a balloon on one side, causing the other side to swell," Ms Ulta told The Straits Times yesterday. "Once militants declare to be *pengantin* (martyr), they will never back out. If any obstacle arises, they will either delay their act or move to another place to realise their commitment."

Ms Ulta also said that the male suicide bomber possibly belonged to a cell of the Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), which was established by Indonesian firebrand cleric Abu Bakar Bashir. JAT was founded after he had disagreements with fellow senior leaders within Jamaah Islamiyah, a South-east Asia terror network he had earlier founded.

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8 killed in assault on hideout of S'porean terrorist

Raul Dancel
Philippines Correspondent
In Manila

Philippine security forces have killed at least eight militants in an assault on a jungle lair in the volatile south where a Singaporean terrorist was believed to be hiding.

Major-General Cirilito Sobejana, commander of the 6th Infantry Division, told reporters that the Singaporean, Muhammad Ali Abdul Rahiman alias "Muawiyah", was among the "high-value targets" inside the camp on war-torn Mindanao island.

But Muawiyah apparently survived and managed to flee.

The camp appeared to be the main base of a faction of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (Biff) that government troops overran early yesterday morning.

A 226kg bomb was dropped on the main fortification inside the camp, in Sultan sa Barongis town in Maguindanao province, where Muawiyah and six other foreign terrorists – two Malaysians, two Indonesians and two "Middle Eastern-looking" men – were believed to have been housed, he said.

Referring to Muawiyah, Maj-Gen Sobejana said: "We're still pursuing them, and checking if he was among those hit by the bomb."

He said the bodies of eight militants were recovered.

The assault followed a clash on Saturday in a neighbouring province that killed eight soldiers and three militants in Patikul town, Sulu province. The clash between a Rangers unit and over 100 Abu Sayyaf fighters broke out as security forces pursued those behind an attack on a Roman Catholic cathedral in Sulu on Jan 27 that left 22 dead.

The Biff is a splinter group of the 12,000-strong Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the main secessionist group that has signed a peace pact with the government. The Biff has pursued a more hardline approach, pledging allegiance to the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Muawiyah is the chief suspect in the kidnapping of three workers of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in Sulu province, in war-torn Mindanao island in 2009. He fled to Mindanao in the 1990s.

He was first reported killed in an air strike in Jolo province in 2012. This was never verified. He was again said to have died in military offensives across Maguindanao in 2016. Again, there was no confirmation.

Another Singaporean militant, Abu Hud Zain, was reported to have been killed in clashes in Mamasapano on Dec 22. His death and those of four other militants reportedly led to the New Year's Eve bombing of a Cotabato city mall last year.

Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has said the military is keeping tabs on at least 44 foreign terrorists who have sought refuge in Mindanao.

Two are Singaporeans, he said.

Intelligence officials, however, have yet to provide positive identification of any of them. Maj-Gen Sobejana said the Maguindanao camp was run by the Muhajireen Wal-Ansar, also known as the Maguindanao Daulah Islamiyah, a faction of the Biff under the firebrand preacher Esmail Abdulmalik, also known as Abu Turaife.

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British MPs said they were “deeply troubled” by the reports on Nissan’s decision.

Local Labour MP Bridget Phillipson tweeted that the reports “represent deeply troubling news for the north-east economy – So many jobs and livelihoods depend on Nissan’s success”.

Her colleague Julie Elliott, also from Labour, said Brexit had played an “inevitable role” in the decision.

An EU campaign placard outside the Houses of Parliament in London warning that leaving EU would lead to an exit of the car industry and Airbus from Britain.
PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Nissan cancels plans to make next SUV in UK amid Brexit tumult

Japanese carmaker says it will consolidate X-Trail production in Kyushu instead

LONDON • Carmaker Nissan has scrapped plans to build its new X-Trail SUV in Britain, saying it had taken the decision to consolidate production in Japan and warning two months before Brexit that uncertainty was making it harder to plan for the future.

Nissan said four months after Britain voted to leave the European Union in June 2016 that it would manufacture the new X-Trail in Britain, which was seen as a major vote of confidence in the country and then new Prime

Minister Theresa May.

A source told Reuters that Nissan received a letter from the government at the time, promising extra support in the event that Britain’s departure from the European Union hit the competitiveness of its Sunderland plant.

But yesterday, Nissan, which operates Britain’s single-biggest car factory where it builds roughly 30 per cent of the country’s 1.52 million cars, said in a statement it was reversing that decision.

“The company has decided to



A file photo of Nissan’s manufacturing plant in Sunderland, which makes the Qashqai SUV and other models. Nissan said planned investment in the next-generation Juke and Qashqai was unaffected. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

optimise its investments in Europe by consolidating X-Trail production in Kyushu, the production hub for this global model,” it said.

“While we have taken this decision for business reasons, the continued uncertainty around the UK’s future relationship with the EU is not helping companies like ours to plan for the future,” said Europe chairman Gianluca de Fichchy.

The company said planned investment in the next-generation Juke and Qashqai, also announced in

2016, was unaffected.

Last year, Nissan cut hundreds of jobs at the Sunderland factory in response to declining demand for diesel models. Production at the site fell 11 per cent last year.

Broadcaster Sky News, reporting on the Nissan decision on X-Trail on Saturday, said the announcement would raise doubts about further Nissan investment in Britain.

British MPs said they were “deeply troubled” by the reports.

Local Labour MP Bridget Phillipson tweeted that the reports “rep-

resent deeply troubling news for the north-east economy – So many jobs and livelihoods depend on Nissan’s success”.

Her colleague Julie Elliott, also from Labour, said Brexit had played an “inevitable role” in the decision.

The failure of Britain’s government so far to negotiate a smooth exit plan from the EU has made car manufacturers less willing to use Britain as a European manufacturing centre. Investment in Britain’s car industry

halved last year, data showed last Thursday.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said leaving the EU on March 29 without a transition deal to preserve the smooth flow of parts and finished vehicles across EU borders would cause “permanent devastation” to the British car industry.

Other multinational giants including Airbus warned last week that British jobs could suffer in the event of an unfavourable Brexit outcome.

Meanwhile, Mrs May said she would seek a “pragmatic” Brexit deal that can win over both the EU and her own lawmakers when she returns to Brussels for talks soon.

Writing in the Sunday Telegraph, she suggested that Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn had agreed with her that the Irish border backstop, as set out in the Withdrawal Agreement, had to change.

“It’s why when I return to Brussels, I will be battling for Britain and Northern Ireland, I will be armed with a fresh mandate, new ideas and a renewed determination to agree (to) a pragmatic solution that delivers the Brexit the British people voted for, while ensuring there is no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland,” she added.

In last Tuesday’s House of Commons vote, a narrow majority of lawmakers backed Mrs May’s plan to renegotiate the so-called “backstop” – the part of the withdrawal agreement that guarantees an open Irish border after Brexit.

REUTERS, DPA

SEE OPINION A17

Plan to evacuate royals in case no-deal Brexit sparks riots

COLD WAR EMERGENCY PLANS

These emergency evacuation plans have been in existence since the Cold War, but have now been repurposed in the event of civil disorder following a no-deal Brexit.

BRITAIN’S THE SUNDAY TIMES, quoting a source from the Cabinet Office.

LONDON • British officials have revived Cold War emergency plans to relocate the royal family should there be riots in London if Britain suffers a disruptive departure from the European Union next month, media reports said yesterday.

“These emergency evacuation plans have been in existence since the Cold War, but have now been repurposed in the event of civil disorder following a no-deal Brexit,” Britain’s The Sunday Times said, quoting an unnamed source from the government’s Cabinet Office, which handles sensitive administrative issues.

The Mail on Sunday also said it had learnt of plans to move the royal family, including Queen Elizabeth, to safe locations away from London.

Britain’s government is struggling to get parliamentary support for a Brexit transition agreement with the EU before the departure date of March 29, and the government and businesses are preparing contingency plans for a “no-deal” Brexit.

Business groups have warned of widespread disruption if there are lengthy delays to EU imports due to new Customs checks, and even pos-

sible shortages of food and medicine.

Last month, an annual speech by the 92-year-old Queen to a local women’s group was widely interpreted in Britain as a call for politicians to reach agreement over Brexit.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg, a Conservative lawmaker and keen supporter of Brexit, told the Mail on Sunday that he believed the plans showed unnecessary panic by officials over a no-deal Brexit, as senior royals had remained in London during World War II bombing.

But The Sunday Times said a former police officer formerly in charge of royal protection, Mr Dai Davies, expected Queen Elizabeth would be moved out of London if there was unrest.

“If there were problems in London, clearly you would remove the royal family away from those key sites,” he was quoted as saying.

REUTERS



Britain’s Queen Elizabeth is expected to be moved out of London if the country suffers Brexit-related unrest.
PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Faulty job data blasted in latest Japanese scandal

Labour Ministry admits that real wages might actually have fallen

Walter Sim
Japan Correspondent
In Tokyo

Japan's Labour Ministry has drawn flak after it was found to have released faulty job data for years, in what the opposition has slammed as a ruse to burnish the sheen of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's economic policies.

Among other things, the improperly-compiled data has been used to determine unemployment benefits pegged to real wage growth.

While observers have long said that official wage data seem far from an accurate reflection of the realities on the ground, the admission by the Labour Ministry that real wages might have actually fallen for most months last year will put pressure on an economy that still suffers sluggish spending.

Revised figures, showing that real wages dropped by an average of about 0.5 per cent year on year in

the 11 months to November, are expected to be presented to Parliament this week. This is worse than the average 0.05 per cent decrease announced previously.

"Abenomics is nothing but a costume," Mr Tetsuro Fukuyama, secretary-general of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan said in Parliament.

Mr Yuichiro Tamaki, who leads the opposition Democratic Party for the People, said the situation amounts to "wage forgery".

Mr Abe apologised for the scandal but stressed that the issues with data collection does not extend to the gross domestic product, adding: "I've never emphasised the achievements of Abenomics by referring only to the figures in question."

Public broadcaster NHK reported on Saturday that senior labour ministry officials had known, since 2006, there were issues with data collection, but had not come clean.

While this predates Mr Abe's administration, the Nikkei newspaper cited sources as saying that senior government statistical bureaucrats were aware from about 2013 of possible irregularities in the data.

This latest scandal follows a

ONLY A COSTUME

Abenomics is nothing but a costume.



MR TETSURO FUKUYAMA, secretary-general of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, on what the opposition perceives as a ruse to burnish the sheen of PM Shinzo Abe's economic policies.

NOT ONLY FIGURES

I've never emphasised the achievements of Abenomics by referring only to the figures in question.



MR SHINZO ABE, Japan's Prime Minister, on the issues with data collection not extending to the gross domestic product.

litany of bureaucratic wrongdoings in the last two years that would have brought down a Japanese government in the past: cooked Finance Ministry records over a questionable sweetheart land deal, inflated data on the hiring of persons with disabilities, and the mismanagement of Self-Defence Force military deployment logs.

But approval ratings for Mr Abe, now into his seventh year in power discounting a short-lived stint in 2006, remain steady.

Media polls suggest the public continue to favour Mr Abe after a revolving door of six Premiers in as many years, and as the opposition camp is in disarray with local and national elections looming this year.

But a series of missteps could hurt public trust in the civil service.

A neutral commission, convened last month to get to the bottom of why 23 out of 56 fundamental job indicators had been improperly compiled since 2004, turned out to be anything but independent, as senior labour ministry officials conducted some of these interviews.

Under the Monthly Labour Survey, the ministry is supposed to study all corporations with at least

500 employees. But from 2004, officials reviewed only about a third of these companies in the Tokyo area.

As such data is used to determine unemployment and other benefits, more than 20 million people ended up being shortchanged about 56.8 billion yen (\$5701 million) – which Tokyo has promised to return.

Mr Abe has resisted opposition calls to dismiss labour minister Takumi Nemoto, who he named to the role in a Cabinet reshuffle in October, saying he wants him to "continue taking a leading role to swiftly repay the missing benefits".

There has been criticism from within his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Some said it is necessary to break up the massive Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and "restart it from scratch".

The ministry was formed in 2001 through a merger of two ministries, and the party's chief of the health, labour and welfare division Shinjiro Koizumi was quoted as saying that it is "very worrisome that governance at the ministry is broken".

The Nikkei Asian Review said in an editorial: "Salary and wage data is not only closely watched as a key indicator of personal income and consumer spending, it is also used to assess the effects of government policies. The ramifications of faulty numbers are, therefore, enormous."

The problems with shoddy data collection, however, continue to reverberate. Last Friday, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications revealed problems with its survey methods in a retail price indicator that is used in calculating the consumer price index.

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Arranging motorbikes sparks joy in Indonesian security guard

JAKARTA • Popular Japanese tidying expert Marie Kondo would be proud of Slamet Gunaedi.

The 47-year-old security guard at the SMAN 4 South Tangerang state high school in Banten province has a knack for keeping things organised. And for him, organising motorbikes in the school's carpark is what sparks his joy the most.

Mr Slamet's impeccable tidying skills have won him the attention of netizens after social media posts showcasing the neat lines of motorbikes he organised went viral.

He has been arranging the hundreds of motorcycles owned by teachers and students according to their make, type and colour.

"I love order. Besides, (the arrangement) also helps the owners, for example, if someone is sick and needs to leave school. If the motorbikes are parked in a messy way, it will be difficult to get it out," he was quoted as saying by the Kompas.com news website.

He said he has been doing his job for the past 19 years, working from 5.30am to 5pm every school day. He chose to do all the work by himself after a negative experience working with someone he claimed was dishonest.

The person, he said, took belongings stored inside the motorbikes.

As a contract worker, his salary is often paid late. To help him make ends meet, he works as an online motorcycle taxi driver after work.

"I get my paycheck once every two or three months," he said, adding that his 1.25 million rupiah salary (\$\$120) was not sufficient to pay his monthly housing rent of 1.7 million rupiah and other expenses, including for his children's needs. "But thank God there is always a way."

His skills have also landed him an award from the South Tangerang police, who gave him a security guard innovation award on Friday.

South Tangerang deputy police



Indonesian security guard Slamet Gunaedi has gained viral fame for the way he organises motorbikes. PHOTOS: AESTEGURLS/TWITTER

chief commissioner Arman, who like many Indonesians goes by only one name, said the award aimed to honour Mr Slamet's innovation and his concern for the students.

"Usually, security guards only focus on security, but Slamet cares for the students," Mr Arman told Kompas.com.

Moreover, students can learn a lesson from Mr Slamet's actions. "Slamet teaches discipline and orderliness to students from the arrangement of the parked motorbikes," Mr Arman said.

THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



Rise in number of Malaysian drug mules nabbed abroad

SUBANG JAYA • There is an increasing trend of Malaysians being used to transport drugs, with some of them taking up the roles voluntarily to get cash, said the country's top narcotics chief.

Twenty-three Malaysians were caught as drug mules in Hong Kong alone last year, the federal police's Narcotics Crimes Investigations Department deputy director Zulkifli Ali was quoted as saying by Malay Mail online news yesterday.

"I myself was shocked when I was briefed of how many were arrested overseas," he said, speaking at a news conference at the Subang Jaya district police headquarters.

"There is also a significant increase in locals getting arrested in Australia and South Korea," said Mr Zulkifli, who is also senior assistant commissioner.

Most of them offered to act as mules for between RM5,000 and RM10,000 (\$\$1,650 and \$3,300) if

they made a successful run.

"They will first be given a deposit payment, and then, the remainder once they return safely. But if their luck runs out and (they) are caught, they don't get paid," he said, as quoted by Malay Mail.

Earlier last week, eight Malaysians were charged with drug trafficking in Incheon, South Korea, after they were caught with a total of 13.3kg of methamphetamine.

They were accused of attempting

to smuggle the drugs worth some RM161.4 million into South Korea from Malaysia, via the Incheon and Gimhae international airports, on five occasions from Dec 27 last year to Jan 17 this year.

The drugs were packed into 1kg to 2kg bags and strapped to the suspects' thighs and abdomens before attempts to pass through security.

Mr Zulkifli was quoted by Bernama news agency in December as saying 425 Malaysian drug

mules were detained by the authorities of 19 countries between 2013 and October last year.

He said Singapore recorded the highest number of Malaysian drug arrests, with 175 people languishing in its prisons.

This was followed by Indonesia, where 85 Malaysians had been arrested, 49 in Thailand, 34 in Australia and 21 in Japan.

In December, Mr Zulkifli said that international syndicates, often mas-

terminded by African nationals, were recruiting Malaysians, especially women, by financing their flights to certain countries.

The women were given RM2,000 in pocket money and promised RM5,000 to RM10,000 if they succeeded in their shady missions.

Meanwhile, Mr Zulkifli said that the Malaysian police seized nearly 93kg of ketamine from a drug dealer's car on Friday along Jalan Jengka in Pahang state, The Star online news reported yesterday.

"The drugs were found in sacks at the back of his car," he said, adding that two suspects were in custody.



Mr Stephen Biegun will meet South Korean officials to discuss the second Trump-Kim summit.

SEOUL • US special representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun arrived in South Korea yesterday for working-level talks on a proposed second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Yonhap news agency reported.

Mr Biegun plans to meet his North Korean counterpart Kim Hyok Chol to discuss the agenda and other issues ahead of the summit slated for later this month, Yonhap said, citing a diplomatic source it did not identify.

Mr Trump has said he will announce the time and location of the second summit with Mr Kim early this week.

Separately, Mr Biegun will visit the South Korean presidential Blue House today to meet South Korea's national security adviser Chung Eui-yong, ahead of the talks with North Korea, YTN reported, citing an unidentified Blue House official.

Mr Biegun will meet North Korean officials on Feb 5 and the venue could be its capital of Pyongyang or the inter-Korean border village of Panmunjom, according to YTN. The talks may last more than a day.

Panmunjom was the venue of the working-level dialogue between Mr Biegun and his then-North Korean counterpart Choe Son Hui before the first meeting between Mr Trump and Mr Kim in Singapore last June.

The upcoming dialogue is widely expected to set the ground rules for the second Trump-Kim meeting, while Seoul officials believe the sides may also begin drafting a joint declaration of the leaders to be issued at their second meeting. BLOOMBERG

Chinese retail sector chasing the festive sales dollar

Higher sales expected for luxury, duty-free goods but lower demand for Chinese liquor

BEIJING • China's consumers have cut back on purchases of everything from Apple iPhones to Swiss watches, as the trade war with the United States hits the economy.

Landing just days after hundreds of local companies issued profit warnings and multinationals sounded the alarm about softening demand, the week-long Chinese New Year holiday will provide the next litmus test of the resilience of the Chinese shopper.

Starting today, the seven-day period sees hundreds of millions of people travel within the country to see relatives, fly overseas to take vacations – and open their wallets to buy gifts. Last year, the Chinese spent 926 billion yuan (\$185 billion) at restaurants and stores ringing in the Year of the Dog.

This year's celebration is the first to take place during a trade war with the US, and as China's 1.4 billion people prepare to welcome the Year of the Pig, the data does not bode well.

The trade fight has dragged on China's stock and property markets, and gross domestic product in the final quarter of last year rose at the slowest pace since the global financial crisis.

Companies selling to middle-class consumers will be the most vulnerable this holiday as wealthier

Chinese continue shopping but the more budget-conscious cut back, said Mr Adam Xu of consulting firm OC&C who advises retail and consumer companies on their China strategy.

"The slowdown in growth is happening and most likely in the mass part of the market," Mr Xu said.

Here is the outlook for some industries that count on Chinese consumers spending to ring in the New Year holiday.

BUYING BLING

Demand for jewellery has traditionally climbed during the holiday because gold is seen as an auspicious gift from older generations to younger ones.

These days, it is not just the weak economy that has the bling industry feeling the holiday blues.

Mr Nikos Kavalis, London-based director of research firm Metals Focus, said buying "will not be what it used to be 10 years ago because a lot more Chinese consumers nowadays choose to travel abroad rather than go to their home town".

LUXURY LITMUSTEST

Many of the big luxury brands say that China's rich are still shopping hard.

French fashion giant LVMH last

Tuesday reported strong demand for its spirits and leather goods from Chinese consumers.

But there have already been pockets of weakness.

Exports of Swiss watches to China slumped in December and Swatch Group reported last Thursday that China contributed to a slowdown in the fourth quarter.

DUTY-FREE BOOM

Chinese consumers account for a third of global duty-free spending, and the economic slowdown has weighed on travel companies.

The Chinese New Year could be key to turning things around.

More than 400 million Chinese tourists are likely to travel domestically during the holiday, about 4 per cent more than last year, according to Citigroup.

Seven million Chinese will head to overseas destinations, an 8 per cent rise from last year.

With the yuan down over the past year, tourists may be heading to more affordable destinations in Asia and duty-free operators like Japan Airport Terminal could benefit.

COUNTING ON HIGH ROLLERS

Last year, Macau had more than 900,000 visitors during the New Year break, about 40 per cent more than the average week. Average hotel rates were about 2,000 patacas (\$330), almost four times the usual price.

Weakness in China's property and manufacturing sectors has dampened the annual outlook for the world's largest gaming destination. Analysts expect Macau's casino revenue this year to decline about 1 per cent from last year, according to a Bloomberg survey.

BOOZY TIMES

Holiday purchases will account for about one-quarter of total sales for Kweichow Moutai, producer of China's favourite baijiu liquor.

But demand for premium baijiu products has weakened from two months ago, according to a report published by China International Capital on Jan 23 that said prices for premium liquor had dropped by 20 per cent from last October.

BLOOMBERG



Chinese state media has slammed cartoon Peppa Pig for "destroying children's youth and breaking rules", but her popularity has risen ahead of Chinese New Year, with this year being the Year of the Pig. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

'Gangster' Peppa fights off criticism this Year of the Pig

BEIJING • Roasted as a subversive symbol and chopped from a video streaming website in China, it seems Peppa Pig, the loveable but imperious British cartoon character, faces a bleak future in the communist-led country.

But her popularity has risen unabated, and just months after state media slammed her as an emblem of counterculture, she is playing a starring role as the country ushers in the Year of the Pig tomorrow.

A new film titled Peppa Pig Celebrates Chinese New Year is being released on the first day of the holiday.

The movie shows Peppa celebrating Chinese New Year with two new friends – Jiaozi (dumpling) and Tangyuan (glutinous rice ball)

– named after popular local delicacies.

The animation, which follows the daily adventures of a bright pink piglet, her brother George and her parents, is hugely popular with Chinese children.

The cartoon's focus on family values has resonated with Chinese parents, said Ms Li Xin as she bought a Peppa toy for her four-year-old at a Beijing store.

Peppa Pig was first broadcast in China in 2015 and the cartoon's shows have since been watched around 60 billion times on the country's largest video streaming sites, said Enders Analysis research analyst Jamie MacEwan.

But last May, some 30,000 cartoon clips were removed from a

popular video streaming site, following criticism from state media.

"No matter how gangster Peppa Pig becomes, it cannot be allowed to destroy children's youth (or) break rules," an editorial in the People's Daily said last April.

The success of the Peppa brand has also brought other headaches for the cartoon's creators. Copycat merchandise can be easily found in corner stores in Chinese cities.

A spokesman for Entertainment One – the Canadian media company that currently produces the series – told Agence France-Presse that in the past year, more than half a million fake Peppa Pig items were seized and tens of thousands of online sale posts taken down.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



81

Number of "green trains" still operational in China.

>40

Number of years one train service has been in operation. It has become the first choice for more than one million forest workers stationed in the mountains.

\$5

Cost of a 410km trip.

Migrant workers on a "green train" service returning home to Jiagedaqui in north-eastern Heilongjiang province from Beijing last month for Chinese New Year. PHOTOS: XINHUA

China's 'green trains' transport hope amid era of high-speed rail

CHENGDU • In an age of high-speed trains, the slow, cheap "green trains" that dominated China until the 1990s have kept running in remote and mountainous areas.

A total of 81 "green trains" are still operational in China, bringing convenience and hope to those without high-speed trains or highways.

When Train No. 6272 pulled at Lesser Khingan Range station in north-east China at about 9pm, it was minus 30 deg C outside.

Mr Tian Zhi, a 46-year-old boiler, was busy stoking the stove and

cleaning slag. He could hardly take a rest. "To keep the carriages warm and guarantee passengers hot water to drink, the stove must be working all the time," he said.

The train has been operating for over 40 years, and has become the first choice for more than one million forest workers stationed in the mountains. "It is definitely safer to take trains rather than buses in winter. The 410km trip costs only 25.50 yuan (\$5)," said forest worker Zhang Wentao, 56.

In a less-developed area in north-



Train master Luo Jiangjun briefing two young passengers on safety precautions aboard a "green train" between Chengdu and Chongqing last Thursday.

western Shaanxi province, a green carriage labelled "village market" on its body makes it unique. Inside the carriage, seats have been removed to make room for storage and stainless steel counters.

Mr Tian Shigui, from Lijiahe village in Hanzhong city, walked to the "market" directly after boarding the train. In his back basket, bags of soya beans, wheat, peanuts and walnuts attracted a circle of passengers in a few minutes.

"It's a good day. I don't have to go to market if I can sell all of them on the train," he said.

As the day was about to dawn, Train No. 5633 in south-western Sichuan province was ready. Local ethnic Yi people were boarding the train with their hands full of goods.

Mr Yihuo Wusha, 54, has been taking the train for more than 20 years.

"For us Yi people along the route, we can barely live without the train. All those years, we have been depending on it, whether it's a wed-

ding, funeral, attending school or doing business," he said.

Mr Pei Bo, the conductor on the train, said the whole journey was 353km, with ticket price ranging from two yuan to 25.5 yuan.

"The train has a capacity of 1,500 passengers and is always packed, with 95 per cent being Yi people."

A'niu Wuxia, a 15-year-old girl from Xide county, Liangshan prefecture, was wearing earphones while learning English on her smartphone.

"I want to go to university in Chongqing, because the hotpot there is so delicious," she said. She has two sisters, also in school. Their parents work on a construction site in Shanghai.

Yi people barely let girls go to school in the past. Thanks to the green train, every household sends their children, boys and girls, to better places for schooling, said Mr Wang Zhigang, head of a station along the route. XINHUA

Voting machines spark row as India polls loom

Election officials defend their use as opposition parties revive allegations that they can be tampered with

Debarshi Dasgupta
India Correspondent
In New Delhi

With about three months left until parliamentary elections begin in the world's largest democracy, Indian opposition parties are training their fire at electronic voting machines.

This issue returned to the spotlight last month after a press conference in London, during which Mr Syed Shuja, a United States-based cyber security researcher, said electronic voting machines used in the 2014 Indian elections were hacked.

He alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which won at the polls that year, had hacked the machines using a modulator that transmits a military-grade frequency. He did not provide evidence to back his claims, which have been widely dismissed.

But this has not stopped top opposition leaders from reviving their campaign against the voting machines, which have replaced paper ballots in Indian elections.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister and Telugu Desam Party leader N. Chandrababu Naidu, in a Twitter post on Jan 21, said: "Electronic voting machines are turning out to be a big threat to democracy. It is worrying to know the claims made on the possibility of tampering with electronic voting machines."

"The Election Commission of In-

dia (ECI) must seek opinion of all political parties and revert to the paper ballot system immediately."

Last month, a four-member committee of opposition leaders was formed to evaluate how the voting machines work, and find ways to prevent tampering with them.

Allegations that the voting machines were tampered with started from the time of their widespread use in state and general elections in 1999. These claims became louder after the BJP's emphatic win in 2014 gave India its first single-party majority government in 30 years.

The BJP has defended the use of the voting machines but when the

party lost the 2009 parliamentary elections, it too claimed that the voting machines can be tampered with, and called for the introduction of paper ballots.

Responding to renewed calls to return to a paper ballot system, chief election commissioner Sunil Arora ruled it out, and reiterated that the ECI will not be "intimidated or bullied or pressurised or coerced" into giving up the use of electronic voting machines.

At an international conference on elections in New Delhi last month, he said: "We are not going back to that era when ballot papers were stolen, musclemen employed, besides delay in counting and also too much harassment of the polling staff on ground."

Mr Arora pointed out how, for the Delhi state elections, the BJP won by a handsome majority in 2014, while the Aam Aadmi Party won a landslide victory in February 2015. He asked: "My simple question is, why if the result is 'X', electronic voting machines are right, and if the result is 'Y', they are faulted?"

Electronic voting machines have been used in more than 115 state elections and four parliamentary elections since 1998. Their use has been widely credited with ending electoral fraud like booth capturing as well as the possibility of errors and delays in counting paper ballots.

The machines are manufactured at two state-owned enterprises, and the ECI has repeatedly defended them as "absolutely tamper-proof".

However, the debate over electronic voting machines has led to greater transparency. Following

NO TURNING BACK

We are not going back to that era when ballot papers were stolen, musclemen employed, besides delay in counting and also too much harassment of the polling staff on ground.



CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER SUNIL ARORA, speaking at an international conference on elections in New Delhi.



People trying out an electronic voting machine with a voter-verifiable paper audit trail at a demonstration by the Election Commission of India in Mumbai. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

calls for more accountability, the ECI introduced electronic voting machines with a paper trail system in 2013. After a vote is cast on these machines, they print a paper slip with the serial number, name and symbol of the candidate chosen. Voters can see the paper slip through a transparent window for seven seconds, after which it is automatically cut and pushed into a sealed box.

This enables voters to verify if their choice has been recorded correctly. The paper slips also allow poll officials to tally the physical count of votes with those registered electronically on the machine.

The electronic voting machines equipped with a "voter-verifiable paper audit trail" have been widely introduced in elections since then.

The Supreme Court in 2013 also directed the ECI to introduce them for use in the 2014 general polls. The court argued that this feature "is an indispensable requirement of free, fair and transparent" polls.

The ECI has said it is committed

to deploying the paper trail machines at all polling stations in this year's parliamentary elections.

It currently carries out a verification of the paper audit trail count from one randomly selected polling station selected per assembly constituency. However, several political parties have been demanding that this number be increased to up to 30 per cent of booths in each assembly segment.

Dr S. Y. Quraishi, a former chief election commissioner, thinks the paper audit trail option offers a way out of the prolonged debate over electronic voting machines.

He told The Straits Times that the ECI had recently sought the recommendation of the Indian Statistical Institute on the "most scientific sample size of polling booths (where voter-verifiable paper audit trail verification could be carried out), which would give 99.99 per cent public satisfaction".

"That would be an ideal solution," he added.

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Delhi protests against US detention of Indian students

NEW DELHI • India said it has lodged a protest with the United States government after several Indian students were detained there in connection with their enrolment in a fake university, following an undercover operation by US agents.

The US authorities last week said eight individuals who exploited the country's student visa system had been indicted.

They had helped foreign nationals remain illegally in the US by enrolling them into a metro Detroit private university, which was actually being operated by US agents themselves.

The recruiters helped the students to fraudulently obtain immigration documents from the school in a bid to deceive the authorities, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement said. The foreign students, however, had no intention of attending school, it added.

Though the US government did not disclose nationalities of those involved, the Indian foreign ministry on Saturday said "several Indian students" had been detained.

Indian media said more than 100 students had been detained in the US. The Indian government on Saturday issued a rare "demarche" to the US Embassy in New Delhi, telling it that Indian officials needed immediate consular access to the detainees. "We underlined that students, who may have been duped into enrolling in the 'University', should be treated differently from those recruiters who have duped them," it said in a statement.

The Indian government also urged the US to release the students from detention at the earliest, without resorting to deportation against their will.

The American agency had said that the defendants in the case "intended to help shield and hide" the students from US immigration authorities for money. They collectively profited in excess of a US\$250,000 (S\$338,000), it said.

"These suspects aided hundreds of foreign nationals to remain in the US illegally by helping to portray them as students, which they most certainly were not," special agent in charge Steve Francis said last week.

China, India and South Korea together sent 56.1 per cent of all international students in the US in 2017-18, an annual survey by the Institute of International Education showed last year. REUTERS



Pope Francis waves as he boards a plane at Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport in Rome before departing for his visit to the United Arab Emirates. PHOTO: REUTERS

Catholic migrants in UAE look forward to Pope's visit

DUBAI • Like millions of his compatriots, Filipino migrant Ray Erwin adores Pope Francis.

At the weekend, he counted down the hours to a historic papal mass in Abu Dhabi.

"We are very grateful," he told Agence France-Presse (AFP). "It's a chance of a lifetime."

Mr Erwin, 44, will be among 135,000 worshippers expected to gather tomorrow when "Lolo Kiko" (Grandpa Francisco), as the pontiff is affectionately known in the Philippines, holds a vast open-air mass in the Muslim-majority Arabian Peninsula.

The Pope's three-day trip, which was due to start early today (Singapore time), is the first-ever papal visit to the Arabian Peninsula – the birthplace of Islam.

While Muslims make up nearly four-fifths of the United Arab Emirates' population, the country is

also home to nearly a million Catholics, according to the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia.

Most are from India or the Philippines – like Mr Erwin, who has a wife and two daughters and has lived there for 20 years.

Migrants from Asian countries make up about 65 per cent of the population.

Decked out with Vatican flags and a life-like picture of the Pope, St Mary's Catholic Church in the

neighbouring emirate of Dubai has been abuzz with worshippers preparing for the pontiff's arrival.

The church, which can hold about 2,500 worshippers, was packed during mass last Friday.

People lined the walls inside while others stood in the open air to watch the sermon on two big screens.

Indian Irene Ann Tomi, 16, said the Pope's visit would be "an eye opener for all the Christians and

the Muslims in the UAE".

"We are all human," she said. "I believe we are connected by one thread, and that is faith."

The UAE prides itself on its religious tolerance and cultural diversity.

It has eight Catholic churches, compared with four each in Oman, Kuwait and Yemen.

Qatar and Bahrain have one each, while ultra-conservative Sunni powerhouse Saudi Arabia bans all non-Muslim places of worship.

The pontiff's trip is widely seen as encouraging inter-religious dialogue in the region.

Pope Francis will take part in an interfaith conference today and will meet Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the imam of Al-Azhar, Egypt's highest seat of Islamic learning.

Early tomorrow morning local time, more than 2,000 free buses

will transport worshippers from across the Emirates to Abu Dhabi, ahead of the mass scheduled for 10.30 am.

Before leaving Rome yesterday, the Pope called for urgent "respect" for a ceasefire accord in Yemen to allow humanitarian aid through in the conflict-weary country.

"I appeal to all parties concerned and to the international community to allow the urgent respect of established accords, to ensure the distribution of food and to work for the good of the population," he said.

"The population is exhausted by the lengthy conflict and a great many children are suffering from hunger, but cannot access food depots.

"The cry of these children and their parents rises up to God." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

135,000

Number of worshippers expected to gather tomorrow when Pope Francis holds a vast open-air mass in Abu Dhabi. He is on a three-day trip to Arabian Peninsula.



Residents evacuating to higher ground in Hermit Park, Townsville, yesterday after flash floods hit the region following heavy rains. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Tornadoes threaten Aussie city hit by floods

Waterspouts, destructive winds and more flash floods expected in Townsville

INTENSE STORM CELLS

Atmospheric conditions are ripe for tornadoes and waterspouts around Townsville. Damaging to destructive winds are possible in these intense storm cells.



BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY IN QUEENSLAND, said on Twitter.

SYDNEY • The north-east Australian city of Townsville could face tornadoes, just as it is being hit by devastating floods, the authorities said.

“Atmospheric conditions are ripe for tornadoes and waterspouts around Townsville,” the Bureau of Meteorology in Queensland said yesterday on Twitter. “Damaging to destructive winds are possible in these intense storm cells.”

It said Townsville had broken its record for the wettest seven days in a row, with 1,012mm of rain falling by the end of Saturday, compared with the previous record of 886mm in 1998. It warned that more flash floods were expected as rain continued to swell the city’s Ross River Dam, which is at more than 200 per cent of its capacity.

Queensland police said spillway



A man is seen on a unicorn float in floodwaters yesterday in Townsville. The Bureau of Meteorology in Queensland said Townsville had broken its record for the wettest seven days in a row, with 1,012mm of rain falling by the end of Saturday, compared with the previous record of 886mm in 1998. PHOTO: REUTERS

gates may be opened fully and warned residents to stay away from riverbanks and move to higher ground.

The national broadcaster ABC said thousands of homes had been abandoned in Townsville suburbs and evacuations were being conducted. It quoted Townsville disaster coordinator Steve Munro as saying that around 400 to 500 of the city’s 82,000 homes were currently affected by flooding.

He said: “The modelling says what it is going to say – it could move up to 10,000, 20,000 (homes). We don’t want to get to that stage (but we can’t control that).”

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” Townsville resident Chris Brookehouse told national broadcaster ABC, adding that his house was flooded with water more than 1m deep. “The volume of water is just incredible. Downstairs is gone, the fridge and freezer are floating. Another five or six steps and upstairs is gone too.”

Australia’s tropical north experiences heavy rains during the monsoon season at this time of the year, but the recent downpour has surged far above normal levels.

Military personnel were delivering tens of thousands of sandbags to affected residents, as Queens-

land Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk warned residents to be careful.

“It’s basically not just a one-in-20-year event, it’s a one-in-100-year event,” she told reporters on Saturday.

The Bureau of Meteorology said a slow-moving monsoonal trough was sitting above Queensland, with some areas expected to receive more than a year’s worth of rain before conditions ease.

Bureau meteorologist Adam Blazak said the heavy downpours could continue until Thursday, while floodwaters would take some time to recede even when the rains lessen.

There has been a silver lining to the deluge, with drought-stricken farmers in western Queensland welcoming the soaking.

Ms Palaszczuk said yesterday: “It is a welcome relief, especially in our western communities, to not only get the rain, but also to fill up their dams.”

The deluge comes amid a severe drought in the eastern inland of the vast Australian continent, including parts of Queensland state, that has left graziers struggling to stay afloat. The country recorded its hottest month ever in January, with mean temperatures exceeding 30 deg C. DPA, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Winter storm slams southern California, unleashing floods

LOS ANGELES • A new winter storm swept through southern California with heavy downpours and flood waters, prompting partial closures of major highways and mandatory evacuations in areas made vulnerable by last year’s furious wildfires.

The Pacific Coast Highway was shut down on Saturday morning from Las Posas Road in Ventura to Broad Beach in Malibu, due to mud flows and flooding, while a 72km section of the highway was closed south of Big Sur due to felled trees, according to the California Department of Transportation.

Highway 101 was closed in both directions between Milpas Street in Santa Barbara and Route 150, north of Ventura, due to flooding, mud and debris flow.

No homes were affected and road crews were busy clearing the mud.

Local officials urged residents to use an alternate route near Sheldon Street because southbound of I-5 highway was closed due to flooding.

A train was delayed north of Ventura after reports of storm debris on tracks.

The National Weather Service

(NWS) issued flash flood warnings for the Woolsey Fire and Hill Fire burn areas, including all of the Santa Monica Mountains in southeast Ventura County and Southwest Los Angeles County in southwestern California.

Local officials ordered residents in some locations to leave for safer locations. Several evacuation centres were set up for local residents in the areas.

Evacuations were also ordered in the Holy Fire burn area in Riverside County.

The Woolsey Fire, Hill Fire and Holy Fire were destructive wildfires that burned in Southern California last year.

In the Los Angeles region, the rain was becoming more intense as the day progressed, reported the Los Angeles Times.

“We are expecting rain to continue with this storm through Tuesday,” Ms Lisa Phillips, a meteorologist with the NWS, was quoted as saying around midday.

Wind gusts of up to 97kmh and overnight rainfall totals of up to 7.6cm were expected in Los Angeles county. Flash flood warnings



Heavy equipment being used to clear US Highway 101 of mud and water from Romero and San Ysidro creeks in Montecito, California, on Saturday. Heavy rains during the night caused road flooding and numerous trees to fall. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

were also issued for parts of Orange County and the Inland Empire affected by the Holy Fire last year.

The heaviest rains were expected to move east by Saturday afternoon, Ms Phillips said, but more was on the way.

Meanwhile, a Ventura County sheriff’s search-and-rescue team member was killed and three other

team members were injured in a crash on rain-slicked Interstate 5 near Gorman in northern Los Angeles County, officials were reported by the Los Angeles Times as saying.

The group was on its way to Mount Pinos for a training exercise when they saw a crash on the freeway and stopped to help.

“While they were assisting peo-

ple, a vehicle plowed into the scene,” Ventura County Sheriff’s Sergeant Eric Buschow was quoted by LA Times as saying.

“They stopped to help people because that’s what they do. This is another tough day for us.”

At least six other people were injured and taken to hospitals.

XINHUA

Last refugee kids to leave Aussie offshore camps

CANBERRA • Australia is preparing to remove the last four remaining children from its offshore immigration detention camps and fly them to the United States with their families for resettlement, the government in Canberra said yesterday.

Some 220 children have been languishing in the processing camps on the tiny island of Nauru in the South Pacific since 2013, but a massive protest campaign in Australia called Kids off Nauru, which started last year, has forced the conservative government to evacuate all of them.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who took over as leader at the end of August when there were still some 120 children in the camps, said yesterday it was a vindication of his government’s policies. “Since then, and as was made clear at the time, we have been working quietly and methodically through this process without compromising the integrity of Operation Sovereign Borders,” he said in a joint statement with Immigration Minister David Coleman.

He blamed the opposition Labor party for putting the children in detention centres, even though it was he – in his previous role as immigration minister – who oversaw the detention of asylum seekers and refugees arriving at Australian shores by boat.

In December, international medical charity Doctors Without Borders said the majority of those on Nauru were suffering from “inhuman” levels of mental health issues, with about a third of its patients attempting suicide, including children as young as nine.

Since 2013, Australia’s government has been implementing a widely-criticised policy of incarcerating migrants and asylum seekers trying to reach the country by boat in offshore facilities. DPA

Man charged over bomb hoax at Brisbane Airport

CANBERRA • A 50-year-old man was charged yesterday after he allegedly threatened a woman with a knife at Brisbane Airport and claimed he had a bomb, resulting in an emergency evacuation of the airport’s international terminal.

Queensland police said the incident began at about 9pm on Saturday in the terminal’s food court. The man allegedly pulled out a knife after an argument with a woman,

reportedly a family member.

He then allegedly placed a metal object on a table, claiming it was a bomb, and began chasing the woman. The incident ended when police shot the man with non-lethal beanbag rounds, after which he surrendered to the officers.

Police published a photograph of the fake bomb yesterday, with Queensland police commissioner Ian Stewart telling reporters it was

an illustration of the “extraordinary lengths” the man had gone to “to create a perception of risk, threat and fear”.

He said police had an officer who could speak Arabic, the man’s first language, at the scene “within minutes” and this had a “major impact on the swiftness with which the matter could be resolved”.

Despite the bomb threat, police said the matter was not terrorist-

related. Queensland police assistant commissioner Peter Crawford said the man had suffered a “health issue” during the charging process.

The man was charged with two counts each of staging a bomb hoax, making a false statement inferring a plan to damage or destroy an air navigation facility and common assault.

He also faces one count each of contravening a domestic violence

order, stalking with a weapon, stealing and seriously assaulting police.

Mr Crawford said police had checked several vehicles and residences on the Gold Coast for improvised explosive devices following statements made by the man.

The incident caused major disruption at Australia’s third largest airport, which was shut for more than two hours. DPA

News Analysis

Trump's State of the Union speech to focus on choosing 'greatness'

US leader will urge Congress to look beyond partisanship amid optimistic vision for US



Nirmal Ghosh

US Bureau Chief
In Washington

This year's State of the Union (SOTU) address, which President Donald Trump will deliver before the joint Houses of Congress tomorrow night in Washington, is arguably getting even more attention than usual, given the sharp political polarisation in the United States and the drama surrounding this particular SOTU. The address is an important, constitutionally mandated tradition in the US, offering the

president a prime-time audience to showcase his priorities.

President Trump, coming to Capitol Hill in the wake of upbeat job numbers in a robust economy credited to tax reform and deregulation, will be delivering a speech themed "Choosing Greatness", said a senior administration official briefing journalists. The speech will lay out his achievements and, painting an optimistic vision for America, call for political partnership beyond partisanship.

Mr Trump will say: "Together we can break decades of political stalemates, bridge old divisions, heal old wounds, build new coalitions, forge new solutions, and unlock the extraordinary promise of America's future. The decision is ours to make," the official said.

The SOTU is highly choreographed: The Speaker of the House must invite the President, and almost every top figure in America's federal power structure

— including Supreme Court justices — will be present.

There is a handful of guests often invited to make political points.

Last year, Mr Trump recognised, among others, a Coast Guard officer, a California firefighter and an entrepreneur who had his best year in two decades on account of tax cuts.

Others bring guests as well. This year, Democratic Senator Kamala Harris of California, who has announced a run for president in 2020, is bringing one of the over 800,000 federal workers whose pay cheques were withheld during the recent record 35-day partial federal government shutdown over a dispute on funding for a wall on the southern border.

"State of the Union addresses are important not just constitutionally but institutionally, and... paint a vision for the president's legislative agenda for at least that next year," said Brookings Institute senior fellow John Hudak last week.

In this SOTU, there is interest across the board. "It's one of those weird moments when everybody on all sides of the political divide are just looking to the President to

know what's next," he said.

There will be five broad pillars in the President's vision, said the senior administration official who spoke to the media.

The first will be a "safe and legal immigration system". It is the issue of immigration that triggered the last shutdown. Mr Trump will try to show a bipartisan way forward, the official said.

A second pillar will be trade. The President will call upon Congress to ratify the new US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which is supposed to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement.

He will call for Congress to support him in rebuilding America's ageing infrastructure and in lowering the costs of healthcare and prescription drugs.

He will also "update Congress on his diplomatic and military efforts around the world, including his efforts to protect American interests and bring to an end America's endless wars".

The power of the SOTU address is considerable. Last year's speech drew an estimated 45.6 million television viewers. This year, as politics gets more heated, the address offers a critical platform.

Dr Jennifer Mercieca, associate professor of communications at Texas A&M University, told The Straits Times: "Since the midterms, the new wave of Democrats that has swept in is much more progressive. We're talking about the Green New Deal, national minimum wage and universal healthcare — a lot of things we weren't talking about just four months ago."

"The State of the Union is President Trump's chance to regain the national conversation," she said.

Yet, while theoretically Mr Trump should have bipartisan support on a range of issues, from infrastructure to lower drug costs, ideologically there is little common ground.

"There is no incentive," Dr Mercieca said. "If Trump can give both incentives and leadership in how to cooperate, that would be very different, but he hasn't been able to do that so far. Typically, for Trump, what he means by bipartisanship is he wants the Democrats to agree with his policy."

With the second shutdown deadline of Feb 15 looming, the SOTU address comes as both sides remain in a stalemate over the issue of immigration.

Presidential aide Stephen Miller, a hardliner on immigration, is likely to be one of many who will contribute inputs for the President's speech.

"Immigration is such a controversial issue and it is so important for his base," author Aaron Kall, who edited a book on SOTU addresses and is director of debate at the University of Michigan, told The Straits Times. "A lot of that is going to be very divisive and controversial, and it's going to be hard to pivot to something that is bipartisan."

"The political reality is that 2020 is an election year. The Democrats won't like to give the President many legislative wins because he would tout them in 2020."

Mr Trump, ever conscious of ratings, has teased a couple of potential additional announcements this week, which could come in the SOTU address.

He has said he may resort to declaring a state of emergency to appropriate funds for the wall on the Mexico border, if Congress cannot offer him a deal which gets him the wall.

On the foreign front, an announcement is imminent on a date and venue for a second summit with North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, and potentially also a meeting with China's President Xi Jinping.

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Deutsche Bank said to refuse loan to Trump in 2016

NEW YORK • Donald Trump was burning through cash.

It was early 2016, and he was lending tens of millions of dollars to his presidential campaign and had been spending large sums to expand the Trump Organisation's roster of high-end properties.

To finance his business growth, Mr Trump turned to a long-time ally, Deutsche Bank, one of the few banks still willing to lend money to the man who called himself "The King of Debt".

Mr Trump's loan request, which has not been previously reported, set off a fight that reached the top of the German bank, according to three people familiar with the request.

In the end, Deutsche Bank did something unexpected. It said no.

Senior officials at the bank, including its future chief executive, believed that Mr Trump's divisive candidacy made such a loan too risky, the people said. Among their concerns was that if Mr Trump won the election and then defaulted, Deutsche Bank would have to choose between not collecting on the debt or seizing the assets of the president of the United States.

Two of the people familiar with the loan request said the Trump Organisation had been seeking to borrow against its Miami resort to pay for work on a golf property in Turnberry, Scotland. A Trump Organisation spokesman, Ms Amanda Miller, denied that the company had needed outside funding for Turnberry.

"This story is absolutely false," Ms Miller said. "We bought Trump Turnberry without any financing and put tens of millions of dollars of our own money into the renovation, which began in 2014. At no time was any money needed to finance the purchase or the refurbishment of Trump Turnberry."

She did not specifically address whether the Trump Organisation had sought a loan from Deutsche Bank. Mr Troy Gravitt, a Deutsche Bank spokesman, declined to comment.

The failed loan request is an untold chapter in Mr Trump's long and tortured relationship with the banking industry. It shows that he was actively engaged in running his business in the midst of the presidential campaign, and it is likely to attract scrutiny from Democrats on two House committees that are investigating his two-decade relationship with Deutsche Bank.



Mr Donald Trump turned to Deutsche Bank to finance his business growth in early 2016.

Death toll rises to 121 in Brazil dam collapse

BRUMADINHO, Brazil • The toll from a dam collapse last week at a mine in south-east Brazil has risen to 121 dead and 226 missing, according to officials.

The emergency service for the state of Minas Gerais, where the Jan 25 disaster occurred near the town of Brumadinho, said the search was ongoing for bodies.

All those listed as missing are presumed dead, with no survivors being found over the past week.

Virtually all those who died and were missing were workers at the iron ore mine, buried under an avalanche of sludgy mining waste when the dam collapsed above the facility's cafeteria and main administrative area.

It was the second dam disaster in three years at a mine owned by Brazilian mining giant Vale.

The authorities have frozen more than US\$3 billion (\$4.05 billion) in company assets in anticipation that it will pay damages, compensation and fines.

Brazil's Solicitor-General said on Saturday that Vale needs to change its behaviour, cooperate more with



Brumadinho residents holding a memorial service on Saturday for victims of the deadly dam collapse on Jan 25. Virtually all of the 121 dead and 226 missing were workers at the iron ore mine, buried under an avalanche of sludgy mining waste when the dam collapsed above the mine. PHOTO: REUTERS

the authorities and be more transparent. "There has been a behaviour of resistance to complying with obligations and we need effective cooperation, not only in words, but in gestures, in acts, that demon-

strate responsibility for what happened," Mr Andre Mendonca said.

"We need to have an effective assumption by Vale of its responsibility for the event... So, we expect effective, quick responses from Vale

regarding the disaster."

He added that Vale's actions had not improved since the deadly tailings dam collapse in 2015 — the Samarco project that it jointly-owned with BHP Billiton.

In a statement later, the Solicitor-General's office said all of the costs associated with tragedy incurred by the federal government would be charged to Vale.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

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Venezuelan leader bows to pressure for early Parliament polls

People flood streets in protest as calls mount for President Nicolas Maduro to step down

CARACAS • Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro proposed early parliamentary elections on Saturday, seeking to shore up his crumbling rule after a senior general defected to the opposition and tens of thousands thronged the streets in protest against his government.

As domestic and international pressure mounts for Mr Maduro to step down, a senior air force general disavowed him in a video that circulated earlier on Saturday, expressing his allegiance to Parliament head and self-proclaimed interim president Juan Guaido.

The military's support is crucial for Mr Maduro, who is deeply unpopular, largely due to an unprecedented economic crisis that has

prompted an exodus of millions.

Mr Maduro claims he is the victim of a coup directed by the United States.

In a speech to supporters, he said the powerful government-controlled Constituent Assembly would debate calling elections this year for the National Assembly Parliament, which is opposition-controlled.

Mr Guaido has called for a new, fair presidential election after the disputed vote won by Mr Maduro last year.

"You want elections? You want early elections? We are going to have parliamentary elections," Mr Maduro told a pro-government rally in Caracas, held to commemo-



Self-proclaimed Venezuelan interim president Juan Guaido calling for a new, fair presidential election at a rally on Saturday. PHOTO: DPA

rate the 20th anniversary of late socialist leader Hugo Chavez's first inauguration as president.

While small rebellions against Mr Maduro have broken out in Venezuela's armed forces in recent months, there has been no large-scale military uprising against him.

However, General Francisco Yanez of the air force's high command became the first active Venezuelan general to recognise Mr Guaido since he proclaimed himself president on Jan 23.

Venezuela's chief military at-

tache to the US also said he was defecting last week.

"People of Venezuela, 90 per cent of the armed forces of Venezuela are not with the dictator, they are with the people of Venezuela," General Yanez said in the video. "Already, the transition to democracy is imminent."

At an opposition rally in Caracas,

Mr Guaido told his supporters that he expected more to follow General Yanez's example.

Mr Guaido, a previously little-known 35-year-old industrial engineer, has offered the military and public officials amnesty if they defect. "I am certain many officials and soldiers will repeat this gesture, very soon, very soon," he said.

The rally was one of many nationwide on Saturday, where demonstrators decked out in the yellow, red and blue colours of the Venezuelan flag honked horns, pounded on drums and chanted "Guaido, Guaido, Guaido".

Mr Pedro Gimenez, 51, a factory worker in the southern state of Bolivar, said: "It's been years of destruction of companies and poverty. We want a better present and future and we are about to achieve that."

Humanitarian aid from an "international coalition" would soon flow into Venezuela, which is facing rampant hunger and medicine shortages, from collection points in Brazil, Colombia and a Caribbean island, Mr Guaido said.

The self-declared president, who has no control over state institutions or any functions of day-to-day governance, said the opposition would not let up on protests until Mr Maduro stepped down and allowed free elections.

Mr Maduro's adversaries say he has run roughshod over democratic institutions and destroyed the once-buoyant economy through a corruption-riddled exchange control system and arbitrary nationalisations.

The US, Canada and several Latin American nations have recognised Mr Guaido as the legitimate head of state.

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that sending the military to Venezuela was "an option" and that he had turned down Mr Maduro's request for a meeting.

Mr Trump said in a CBS interview: "Well, he has requested a meeting and I've turned it down because we're very far along in the process."

Some European Union member states are expected to officially recognise Mr Guaido next week.

But Mr Maduro still has the backing of Russia, China and Turkey.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said yesterday that countries which have recognised Mr Guaido were fuelling Venezuela's troubles and punishing millions of its people.

"There is a problem in a country, there is a spark that can turn into a fire at any moment. In this case, they should have contributed to the solution of the problem through dialogue," Mr Cavusoglu told reporters in Istanbul.

"But is that how they handled things? No. On the contrary, the event was fuelled from the outside. The people of Venezuela are being punished by such approach," he said. REUTERS

Protesters hoisting a Venezuelan flag as they poured onto the streets in Caracas on Saturday to back self-proclaimed president Juan Guaido's call for early elections. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Once red-hot smartphone market sees slower sales

SAN FRANCISCO • The smartphone market is down but not out, with high prices and other factors combining to chill what had previously been a red-hot sector.

Fresh surveys show global sales had their worst contraction ever last year, and the outlook for this year is not much better.

Still, analysts do not see the sun setting any time soon on the smart-

phone era, seen as a must-have device for many people around the world.

"They don't have a viable replacement yet," independent Silicon Valley analyst Rob Enderle said of the smartphone. "There is always the possibility to go to wearables or head-mounted displays, but none of those have emerged as a real threat."

Worldwide handset volumes de-

clined 4.1 per cent last year to a total of 1.4 billion units shipped for the full year, according to research firm IDC, which sees a potential for further declines this year.

Another market tracker, Gartner, said its research suggested some stabilisation in the smartphone market at the end of last year, said analyst Werner Goertz.

"Mobile phones are here to stay,"

Mr Goertz said, while suggesting that consumers may be waiting for some devices with new features.

Analysts pointed out that other tech products such as personal computers have seen similar ebbs and flows.

"Markets will always have slow moments when companies have to spend more on marketing money to get people to go out and buy stuff," Mr Enderle said.

He added that some consumers are holding off on replacing their devices amid price hikes for premium devices like Apple's iPhone.

"People don't want to spend another thousand bucks to replace something that isn't broken," Mr Enderle said. "In emerging mar-

kets, you can't get people to pay a quarter of their monthly income for a phone; they are not giving up food for texting."

Nonetheless, the latest data suggests the days of red-hot smartphone growth are over and that sluggish growth or contraction is likely in many saturated markets.

Apple recently reported a rare drop in revenue in the fourth quarter. South Korea's Samsung, the world's largest smartphone maker, reported a slump in fourth-quarter net profits, blaming a drop in demand for its key products.

"Globally the smartphone market is a mess right now," said IDC analyst Ryan Reith. "Outside of a handful of high-growth markets like In-

dia, Indonesia, (South) Korea and Vietnam, we did not see a lot of positive activity in 2018."

Mr Reith noted that along with consumers waiting longer to replace their phones and frustration around the high cost of premium devices, there was political and economic uncertainty.

The Chinese market, which accounts for roughly 30 per cent of smartphone sales, was especially hard hit with a 10 per cent drop, according to IDC's survey.

However, Chinese smartphone makers such as Huawei, Oppo, and Xiaomi defied the trend and ended the year with gains, according to Counterpoint Research.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Mobile network body to convene meeting on proposed Huawei ban

PARIS/FRANKFURT • Mobile communications industry body GSMA has proposed its members discuss the possibility that Chinese network vendor Huawei is excluded from key markets, amid concerns that such a development could set operators back by years.

The European Commission is weighing a de facto ban on Huawei's 5G network equipment for next-generation mobile networks in the European Union due to security concerns, sources said.

GSMA director-general Mats Granryd has written to members

proposing to put the debate around Huawei onto the agenda of its next board meeting, a spokesman for the federation said on Saturday.

The meeting will be held this month in Barcelona on the sidelines of the Mobile World Congress, the industry's biggest annual gathering.

Some Western countries, including the US and Australia, have restricted Huawei from building next-generation mobile networks, citing concerns that its equipment may contain "back doors" opening it up to cyber-espionage.

Western governments are also

concerned that China's National Intelligence Law requires its companies and people to collaborate in espionage efforts.

Huawei, the global market leader with annual sales of more than US\$100 billion (S\$135 billion), denies the existence of any back doors. The firm and its founder Ren Zhengfei have repeatedly denied they would spy for China.

Many operators rely on Huawei to build out 5G networks and a de facto ban would be a considerable setback for Europe's efforts to stay competitive in communications, with implications for connected factories, self-driving cars and medical technology.

Deutsche Telekom, Europe's largest telecoms company, has said that, if it had to rip out Huawei equipment from its existing networks, this could delay its plans to roll out new services by two to three years. REUTERS

Drunk passenger fined \$22,000 for forcing Canadian plane to land

WASHINGTON • A few pre-flight drinks can get expensive rather quickly.

But for David Stephen Young, a round of six alcoholic beverages he drank before his flight from Calgary to London prompted a rash of unruly behaviour, culminating in an abrupt turnaround, an arrest and a hefty fine of more than US\$16,000 (S\$21,600).

Young, 44, was ordered by a court judge to pay Canadian airline WestJet for 20,000 tonnes of fuel the pilot had to dump over Alberta to safely land the aircraft back in

Calgary on Jan 4.

The fine came after he pleaded guilty last week to resisting arrest and failing to comply with safety instructions during the fight, according to USA Today.

Young, a British national, tried to access the restroom during take-off and became belligerent with the flight crew and a passenger, the paper said, citing court documents.

Passengers and the crew "were left shaken and threatened by (Young's) behaviour" that was "verbally aggressive", according to the documents.

Young apologised about the "damage and inconvenience" of his behaviour, USA Today reported, adding that the actual burden to WestJet could eclipse US\$150,000 when costs such as passenger reimbursement are included.

Provincial judge Brian Stevenson gave WestJet the option to pursue damages through a civil case. The airline declined to say if it planned to do so.

Young was described as an alcoholic in court, prompting his attorney Michelle Parhar to seek a lower penalty.

He had experienced a recent death in the family, according to Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and was in Canada to visit his mother.

The ruling means Young is "essentially barred from entering Canada, barred from seeing his mother", Ms Parhar said.

WASHINGTON POST

THE STRAITS TIMES

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The Straits Times says

Rising support for the ‘right to repair’

It is the season for decluttering, with Chinese New Year just a day away and Marie Kondo on Netflix for inspiration. While it may be fairly easy to dispose of old T-shirts or soft toys, it is a different proposition altogether when it comes to ageing household appliances and electronic goods. They cost more and may still work, but not as well as before. Disposal is often not dependent on whether they “spark joy” as prescribed by Ms Kondo but how easy it is to repair them. And this is where the “right to repair” movement comes in. It is a growing movement spurred on by rising environmental awareness and is gaining support from the European Union (EU) and state legislatures in the United States. Last month, the EU signed off on a

plan to compel producers of white goods such as washing machines and fridges to make them longer-lasting and more easy to repair.

It is a timely move to rein in the dumping of such goods and electronic gadgets worldwide. An estimated 50 million to 60 million tonnes of e-waste is generated annually as consumers buy more smartphones, laptops, TV monitors and the like, and ditch them at a faster pace. Americans reportedly throw out over 400,000 smartphones every day. The amount of e-waste is rising even as landfills are becoming scarcer. Extending the shelf life of electronic goods and appliances helps cut waste and reduces the pollution, carbon emissions and general drain on resources that go into

their manufacture and disposal. One study found that only 20 per cent of e-waste is recycled properly, with the rest dumped in landfills or taken apart haphazardly, contaminating the soil and groundwater. No doubt the attraction of owning the latest model is partly behind the throwaway consumer culture. But often, the reason starts with manufacturers designing goods that break down after a few years and are hugely difficult to repair. Spare parts are either unavailable or expensive while repair instructions are hard to come by and often restricted to accredited repairers given the proprietary tools needed to fix the device.

The irony is that a buyer ends up effectively with no right to decide where or how to make a

simple repair. The upshot is that many end up buying a replacement, which works well in sustaining manufacturers’ profit margins – not so much the consumer’s bank account or the well-being of the planet. Over a dozen states in the US introduced “right to repair” legislation last year.

More are expected to do so. Companies have every right to make money but the legal intervention suggests that social pressure is having an effect in demanding a better balance between profit-making and consumer rights. The “right to repair” movement may seem niche now, but it is undoubtedly part of a growing awareness that economic activities cannot be sustained without regard for their impact on the environment.

GlobalAffairs

How the Middle East is shaping up

With the US exit from Syria, the coast is clear for other powers to take up the slack – and what is emerging are proxy wars



Jonathan Eyal

Global Affairs Correspondent

ISTANBUL • Almost exactly one century ago, the last remaining troops of the Turkish empire in the Middle East surrendered and limped back home, an event which transformed the region. Britain and France went on to dominate the region for a few decades thereafter but basically, the Middle East we know today was born in that final act of Turkish withdrawal in 1919.

Yet, being in Istanbul – the former capital of that old mighty Turkish empire – a century after that seminal event, it’s hard to escape the conclusion that the Middle East is on the verge of another historic transformation and most certainly not in a positive sense.

The evidence is all around, from the depressing sight of destitute refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria now filling the most menial jobs in Istanbul, to the deep pessimism shared by every diplomat or politician dealing with the region. And matters in the Middle East can get much, much worse in the next few years.

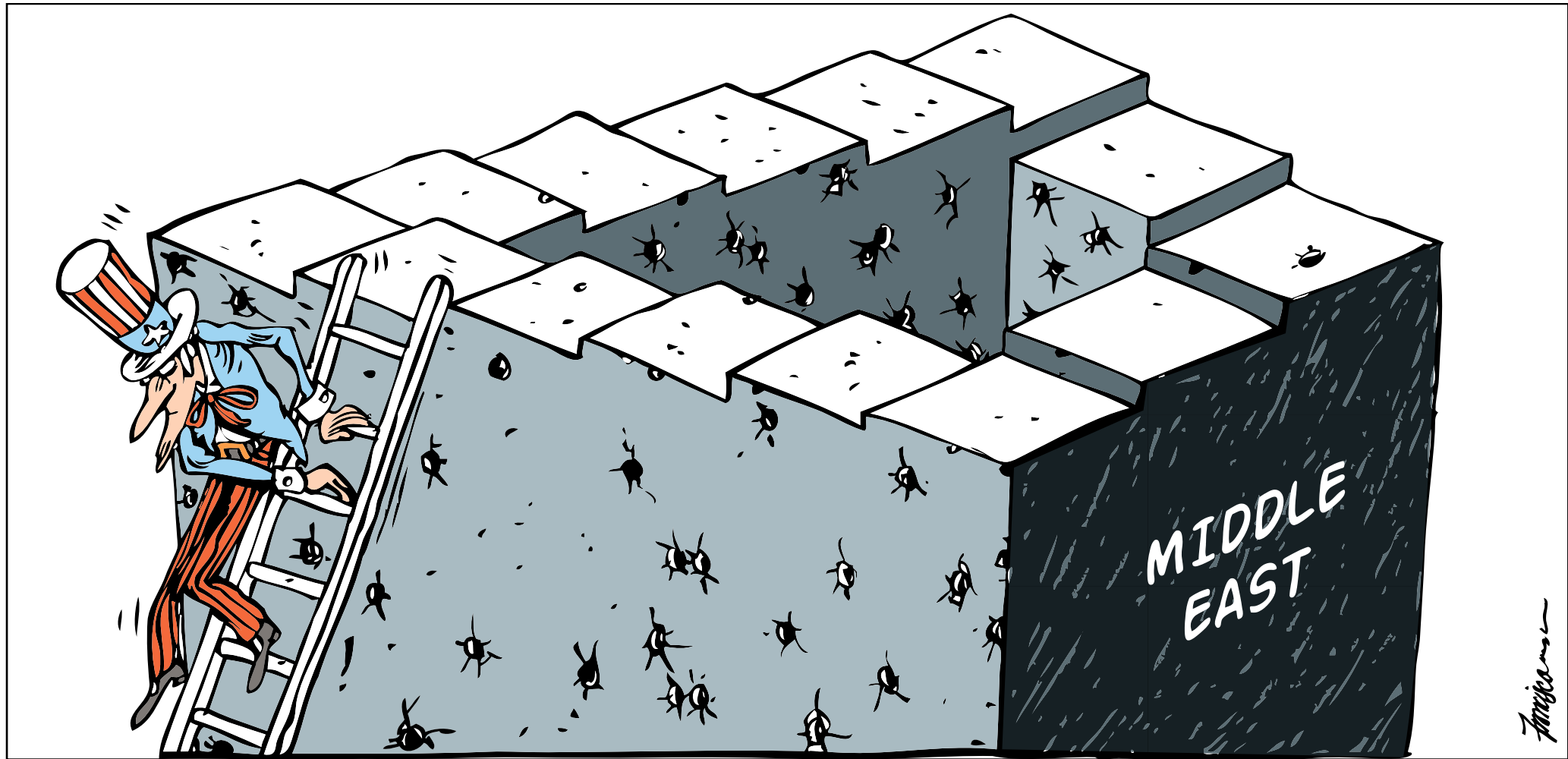
THE PRICE OF COLONIALISM

Like many other parts of the world, the Middle East was forced to pay the heavy price of colonialism.

The Turks did not leave behind a competent administration, and the Brits and the French not only administered the region for too short a period to make much of a difference, but also added to its troubles by carving up the Middle East into states with borders which made little historic, economic or tribal sense.

Then came the creation of Israel, an event still regarded by most Arabs as their biggest humiliation. The fact that, in the context of the region’s broader troubles, the foundation of the Jewish state is most certainly not the key source of the Middle East’s ills is by now immaterial; hostility to Israel and outrage at the plight of the Palestinians are one of the few themes which continue to unite all Arabs and most Muslims.

Bad governance and the Cold War made matters worse. And so did the unequal distribution of



wealth and natural resources.

Egypt alone accounts for one-quarter of all Arabs but is poor, while the fabulous oil and natural gas wealth which belongs to the region is controlled by a handful of small states with populations of barely a few million each.

Contrary to common perceptions, religious extremism – for which the region is now famous – is not the cause of its misery, but also its outcome; where no autonomous economic or political activity was feasible, the mosque became the only focal point of debate and activity, producing young men who hated their rulers and, often, also their rulers’ Western backers.

Given such a toxic brew, the true surprise is not that the Middle East is now in flames, but that it has not exploded much earlier.

There is no question that the region is now facing a particularly dangerous downturn trend.

One reason for this is the failure of the so-called Arab Spring, which not only missed an opportunity to reform local political systems, but also did not tackle the economic frustrations of the youth.

With the notable but single exception of Tunisia, the situation throughout the Arab world is actually worse today than the one prevailing before the wave of revolutions of 2011; local rulers are even less likely to experiment with different ways of governance and the chances of economic reform are virtually nil.

Furthermore, the perennially unstable and deeply divided countries of Lebanon and Iraq have now been joined by Syria, Libya and

Yemen; in all these five Middle Eastern states, central governments either no longer exist or struggle to reassert effective control.

Yet, probably the most important development has been the gradual withdrawal of the United States from its traditional role as a regional hegemon. For those who believe that the US is part of the problem rather than the solution, America’s fading footprint could not have come too soon. But the Middle East is already discovering that, next to US hegemony, the worst thing is the absence of American presence.

To all intents and purposes, the Middle East faces three potential strategic scenarios, and all of them spell more rather than less instability.

THREE SCENARIOS

The first is the possibility that the next US president, perhaps as early as 2021, may reverse Mr Donald Trump’s current policy of combining ardent and unquestioning support for Israel with a near complete abandonment of military involvement in Syria and Iraq, and a distinct lack of interest in any other regional security problem.

But the chances of that happening are small, largely because the old driver of US attention to the Middle East – the imperative of securing US access to energy supplies – is no longer there; the US is actually a net exporter of oil and gas and is likely to remain so for perhaps a decade, sufficient time for alternative energy resources to emerge.

Furthermore, the mood in Washington has changed and a

A better future for the Middle East is certainly possible. For, as the centuries-old history of the region indicates, Islam and technological innovation and prosperity can go hand in hand; Turkey, the region’s old colonial power, is proving now precisely this adage.

Sadly, however, this is not the trajectory the Middle East looks likely to follow.

drastic reduction in foreign commitments is one policy which currently unites most of the US political establishment.

A second possible scenario is that one or two of the current key regional actors could begin to share the burdens of running the region. But, even if one sets aside the question of whether this is desirable, this outcome remains a pipe dream. For the role that the US used to keep for itself is currently being filled by three powers with a regional reach and a willingness to influence events on the ground in a substantial way – Russia, Turkey and Iran.

Tellingly, not one of them is an Arab nation. And, just as tellingly, not one of them can be a hegemon on its own, in the way the US was for over half a century.

This is partly because they lack the resources, as the current

example of Turkey indicates.

The Turks have spent years arguing that they must be given a primary say in what goes on in Syria. But when Mr Trump did precisely that recently, the Turks were stunned and eagerness gave way to hesitation; they know that it’s easier to stumble into a Middle Eastern quagmire, but far more difficult to ever get out of it.

The Iranians may have desires to become the region’s arbiter, but they will have to fight and win a war against Israel before they can realise such a dream, even if one ignores the broader questions of their capabilities; they are already overstretched.

And then, there is Russia. President Vladimir Putin is certainly satisfied with the way he played his military cards in Syria; he has saved Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, an ally, and has succeeded in ensuring that Russia will remain central to the handling of any future Middle Eastern crisis. But that’s not the same as becoming the regional hegemon, something which Russia neither wants nor can succeed in sustaining. So, the answer to the question of who will replace the US role in the Middle East is straightforward – nobody.

The third scenario is that, after a period of mayhem, the region regains its poise and stability, if not its peace and prosperity. Theoretically, this is feasible; that, after all, was how the region functioned for decades. Sadly, however, those days are over and probably for good, largely because, although the revolutions earlier this decade failed to change the Middle East’s governance

performance, they did change the region in one fundamental way: central governments are far weaker today and this weakness looks likely to endure, as various militias are thriving throughout the region.

The most likely outcome, therefore, is a Middle East in which there will be a number of proxy wars at the same time, a scenario which allows Israel to continue ignoring the plight of the Palestinians and allows the world in general to continue ignoring the entire region.

We are already at this stage; few care whether Libya will get another central government (it has not had one since 2011), while Syria has joined Lebanon as another playground of everyone else’s strategic fantasies. Meanwhile, the key objective which the US and its Western allies set out for themselves in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which was to prevent terrorists from ever being able to thrive and organise by exploiting a strategic void in the Middle East, failed comprehensively: the region today has more breeding grounds for terrorists than back in 2001.

A better future for the Middle East is certainly possible. For, as the centuries-old history of the region indicates, Islam and technological innovation and prosperity can go hand in hand; Turkey, the region’s old colonial power, is proving now precisely this adage.

Sadly, however, this is not the trajectory the Middle East looks likely to follow.

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The Jiayuguan fortress in Gansu province is the westernmost pass of the Great Wall of China. In the Chinese national anthem, the Chinese talked about rebuilding a new Great Wall. This is because it is difficult enough organising the Han people and other nationalities in China, and their foreign policy has always been defensive in character, says Singapore's former foreign minister George Yeo. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

The US-China Cold Peace and Singapore's cultural DNA

This is an edited transcript of a speech by former foreign minister George Yeo at the Institute of Policy Studies' Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference last week.

Two hundred years ago, Stamford Raffles established Singapore as a trading post for the China trade. In the 19th century, the jewel in the British crown was India and India's biggest trading partner was China. We are now seeing before us a new China trade, much bigger than the one in the 19th century. Our history profoundly affects who we are and what our future will be. In the last 40 years, China's growth has been phenomenal, resulting in China impinging on the rest of the world, causing almost an inevitable reaction.

When the per capita GDP (gross domestic product) of China reaches half that of the US, China's GDP will be twice that of the US. When it reaches two-thirds, China's GDP will be roughly that of the US, European Union and Japan combined.

So this is the future unfolding before us and it's creating considerable discomfort in the neighbourhood and beyond. In Asia, countries are going back to their history books to try to figure out what China was like in the past because in that past lie opportunities and wisdom for the future.

It is numbers but it's not only numbers. China's population will peak at 1.44 billion in 2029, according to Beijing, and India's population will surely overtake that of China.

But it is not just population, it is the fact of China's homogeneity with over 90 per cent of its people Han, believing in the myth of a common ancestry, having common heroes, celebrating common festivals.

Of course there's considerable regional diversity but the Chinese people, including the Chinese outside China, feel that they belong to one race. And because of that, when China is united, its productivity is awesome.

But, of course, when it declines, the decline is also awesome, and that explains the long cycles of Chinese history.

LONG CYCLES OF CHINESE HISTORY
You take the restoration of China under the Ming, 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang, Nanjing. (In 1368, Zhu defeated the Mongol Yuan and

reunited China.) By 1405, which was a mere 37 years after the founding of Ming, Zheng He's great fleet sailed to the Western Ocean and arrived on our shores.

Just 37 years to consolidate a continental country, to develop industry, to generate the surplus, the technology in so many fields.

The fleets had cartographers, astronomers, scientists, soldiers, diplomats, farmers. They had chicken farms, they grew vegetables and they had shipyards all over the Indian Ocean because these are wooden ships, they needed repair.

In Cirebon (Java, Indonesia) where there is (the shrine of) Gunung Jati, at the base of it, they had a shipyard. And Tan Ta Sen (historian, author of Cheng Ho And Islam In South-east Asia) told me how the Sultan who owns much of the land there wants to redevelop it as a heritage site for the Belt and Road for there the ships were repaired all the way to Africa.

For those farther away, in particular for America, they don't have the history and when they look at China, they view it very differently. When I met Graham Allison (Harvard political scientist who coined the term "Thucydides Trap" on the inevitable conflict when a rising power threatens another) in Beijing a few weeks ago, he said: "Look, this anti-China mood in America is going to get much worse."

This trial of strength oscillating between a Cold War and a Cold Peace will continue for easily another 20 years to come, each testing the other, but America worried – what does a rising China portend? So both sides have publicly said they're preparing for war.

A few months ago, the former US army commander in Europe Lieutenant-General Ben Hodges said: "War between the US and China likely within 15 years." I was in the armed forces before – if you must fight within 15 years and you know your enemy is getting stronger year by year, you prefer to fight tonight.

Of course, war between the US and China – that's madness, but both sides have to prepare for it. But this is the single most important relationship shaping our world

today – the US-China relations. If it is bungled, all bets are off.

All of us will be torn apart as countries, as cities, as companies, as families. Happily, unlike the old Soviet Union, China is not a missionary power. China does not see maritime voyages the way Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (American naval historian) saw the oceans.

I tell my American friends: "Think about it. Why does every Chinese dynasty rebuild the Great Wall?" Many of us are familiar with the strains of the Chinese national anthem, Qi Lai (Arise!). In that national anthem recited countless, sung countless, the Chinese talked about rebuilding a new Great Wall. This is because it is difficult enough organising the Han people and other nationalities in China, and their foreign policy has always been defensive in character. Every Chinese leader reads and rereads Sun Tzu's The Art of War.

You have to understand war, you

This rivalry between the US and China will continue until the US is convinced that China's nature is different from that of the US and different from that of the Soviet Union. And it will take time and China will have to do its part to reassure its neighbours and the other major powers that its nature is different, that its statecraft is principally defensive. And all of us who are at the intersection between these two great countries should play our part to help bridge the differences.

must be prepared for war, but you are a fool to go into war lightly because war, once it begins, will exhaust you and lead to consequences which you cannot anticipate. If you watch the way China is managing relations with the US now – very careful – and I believe the current trade negotiations are likely to succeed because China will go 80 per cent of the way to meet US demands, not because they are afraid or generous, but because they know that time is on their side.

Last weekend I met a Singapore businessman who goes to China often, has a big business in China, so I asked him, "How's China?", meaning the economy. He said, "Bad." In one word – bad. China has been deleveraging deliberately, giving help only to important sectors which they cannot allow to go down.

But the last easing after the global financial crisis created a lot of excesses which they are trying to squeeze out of the system. And they know in every field they're advancing slowly, feeling their own strength.

DEFENSIVE STATECRAFT
This rivalry between the US and China will continue until the US is convinced that China's nature is different from that of the US and different from that of the Soviet Union.

And it will take time and China will have to do its part to reassure its neighbours and the other major powers that its nature is different, that its statecraft is principally defensive. And all of us who are at the intersection between these two great countries should play our part to help bridge the differences.

You take the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) as an example. I was involved in establishing it together with Brunei, Chile and New Zealand many years ago.

I remember trying to persuade Shi Guangsheng, China's Trade Minister, to join. He said: "No, no, no, we've already given too much joining the WTO (World Trade Organisation). We can't do this." And then the Americans came in and under (Barack) Obama and they turned it into an anti-China coalition, which I thought was a mistake.

Then by happenstance Donald Trump became president and the US removed itself from the TPP.

Fortunately (Japanese) Prime Minister Shinzo Abe decided to see it through, push it through. I think Singapore, Japan and other

countries should encourage China to join the TPP but prolong the negotiations.

This will encourage, even force the US to come back in. But we must do this artfully, coordinate the negotiations so that they join at the same time. And whatever China is prepared to give to the US, we say give it to the TPP.

Now intellectual property (IP) is the single most important trade issue in the coming years because of digitalisation. When (Singapore diplomat) Tommy Koh negotiated the free trade agreement between Singapore and the US, IP was a big issue and threatened to derail negotiations. And I remember as trade minister calling a special meeting and we asked ourselves – what is our own future? And we came to the conclusion that it was also IP.

So instead of fighting the US, we went with the US and today Singapore is a major intellectual property centre in all of Asia, to our great advantage. So it is in China's interest to move on IP. And it's in the US' interest. And if the TPP includes China and the US, the WTO will have to follow in its wake and you will have a safer world.

Mr Trump thinks that the US enjoys an advantage in bilateralising relationships. So they reduced the importance of the WTO, the UN (United Nations), other international organisations. Imagine one day China inheriting a bilateralised global system – (and consider that) imperial China (had) perfected it through the tribute system – it is almost instinctual for China to bilateralise relationships and to use economics for political purposes.

But it is not good for China and it is not good for the US, or any of us, for the world to become like that. So moving on the TPP, getting both China and the US in is in fact an important road to a much safer future for all of us. For Singapore, you know, every country, every region is now re-triangulating because of the rise of China.

SINGAPORE'S CULTURAL GENOME
And for Singapore, Asean is very important because Asean gives us buffer, shelters us from the cold winds of superpower rivalry. And it is enlightened self-interest why Singapore puts Asean at the centre of its foreign policy. But what drives our future is not only the external environment; it is who we are inside.

Singapore may be a very small city state, but if you look at our cultural genome, we have a very big

genome, because of Raffles, because of our role in the old China trade, because of our role in the coming China trade. So in us we have a protean capability to evolve in different directions.

So as China becomes more important, we deepen our knowledge of China. India will become the world's second-biggest economy some time later this century. And we will grow our links with India. Indonesia will be the fourth.

And Bahasa, which some of us thought had become a relic language in Singapore for the non-Malays, will become important again because of Indonesia. Politically it's always difficult to manage this diversity in our genome. So the preference is always to simplify it, reduce it, so that we are at the lower homeostasis, as it were.

But it would be suicidal because it is because of our genome that we have this resilience and this ability to adapt to a range of possible futures. It's our best foolproofing, future-proofing of our economy and of our country.

We sometimes get so caught up with the inconvenience, with the quarrels among ourselves that we say, no, no, no, no, no, let's reduce the diversity.

Last night Pak Marty (former Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa) and I had a leisurely stroll along Changi Beach and I wanted to show him a monument we erected in 1992, the 50th anniversary of the fall of Singapore, to mark Sook Ching, the killings on Changi Beach.

And we deliberately did it in four languages, four official languages, with Japanese at the bottom, because it is important for the Japanese to know this history too.

I was so dismayed to find that that monument had been replaced by one which is purely in English. Now, I understand the reasons why it is convenient, whether it's in Changi Airport or whether it is at our museums, to have one language.

This is deliberately reducing our cultural genome because sometimes it creates autoimmune reactions and so on for short-term purposes. It is denying us of a powerful capability, a precious inheritance from the past which in fact will secure our future.

We cannot avoid in Singapore always having debates about race, language, religion, identity. Every link which connects us to China, to India, to Indonesia, to the Middle East – every link is both a plus and creates problems.

Every link is two-way. What connects is also a method of infiltration. So we have to adjust to all this. The day we decide that it is too tiring to do all this, that day we will shrivel and become inconsequential.

I go to the Vatican five times a year for meetings of the Council for the Economy. At every meeting, interpreters, earphones. The day the Church stops using earphones and interpretation, it is no longer the Church. The day Singapore decides to reduce its genome so that we become homogenised, that would be a very uninteresting Singapore.



Pro-Brexit demonstrators outside Britain's Parliament in London last Tuesday. On March 29, unless something is done, Britain will fall out of the European Union without a deal. That will affect every aspect of the economy, says the writer. PHOTO: REUTERS

Collective madness behind Britain's latest Brexit plan

Ian Dunt

Last Tuesday, British Prime Minister Theresa May demanded that her party reject her own Brexit plan so she could go back to negotiations with the European Union (EU) and dismantle an agreement that her government reached with the continent, on an impossibly fast timeline, during talks that have already been ruled out.

On every level, it is an insane way to behave. The British government is actively sabotaging the work it has spent the past two years completing and then doing a victory dance.

The problems all lie with something called the Irish backstop. You wouldn't know it, given how deranged the party has become about it, but it is a Conservative idea. Their problem was simple: They wanted two contradictory things.

On the one hand, the Brexit campaign during the referendum promised to "take back control" from Brussels. That meant returning regulatory decision-making to London. But on the other, it promised that everything would continue as before, with no effect on trade. That is impossible, because as soon as you take back regulatory powers, you have delays on the border with Europe.

The whole issue with the border is based on the concept of trust. In the European Union, member states share laws, courts and enforcement procedures. They know that the rules on the slaughter of cattle, the electronic components of cars or the chemical compounds in children's toys are all the same. They can take someone to court if something goes wrong, even if they are in another country, because they have the same institutions. This creates trust. And that's why goods cross over national borders freely, with no checks.

That has been particularly crucial in Ireland. After years of conflict, peace was reached in the 1990s on the basis of continued cooperation between the north and south of the island. And that meant, more than anything, an open border between the Republic of Ireland in the south and British Northern Ireland in the north.

But then Brexit came and blew it all to pieces. Instead of grappling with the hard choices the vote required, Mrs May pretended that Brexiters could have everything they wanted. London would get back control of regulatory decisions. And the border with Ireland would stay open. The fact that these two promises were



British Prime Minister Theresa May in the House of Commons last Wednesday. On Tuesday, she got her party to reject her own Brexit plan so that she could go back to negotiations with the European Union. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

incompatible was never addressed. She just kept on pretending that it was all possible and that people should have greater faith.

There was a weird, and very un-British, quasi-religious undercurrent to all this – a sense that things would work if you just believed in them hard enough, a hatred of practical judgment and a bubbling tide of chest-beating jingoistic nationalism.

Brexit was a political project based on the idea that identity politics could answer technocratic questions. If the technocratic question keeps proving problematic, you just need to have more faith in your identity. It was like trying to unlock a door with a slice of bread.

That culture has not changed since the 2016 referendum. In the past week alone, three interviews exhibited the kind of fevered puritanism that Brexit has triggered.

Conservative MP Mark Francois responded to a letter from the German chief executive of Airbus, warning that the company might move its factories out of Britain, by tearing it up on live television and saying: "My father, Reginald Francois, was a D-Day veteran. He never submitted to bullying by any German; neither will his son."

A former trade minister, Mr Digby Jones, claimed that negotiations are facing difficulties because "the Remainers and especially the establishment elite have set about sabotaging Brexit".

One Brexit supporter interviewed on the street by the BBC about warnings from retailers over supply chains insisted that it would "do the

country good" to go without food.

For her first two years in power, Mrs May kept pace with this new political culture. She acted like everyone's Brexit dreams would come true and no trade-offs would ever have to be made. And then, last summer, her Brexit strategy finally acknowledged reality.

This involved the backstop. It was an insurance policy. It said that sure, Britain could look for ways to maintain an open border with Ireland while taking control of regulatory decision-making.

But if that failed, which it would, Northern Ireland, at least, would have to lock into the EU's regulatory infrastructure so that the EU would know that the rules on things like cattle slaughter, the electronic components of cars and the chemicals in children's toys were all the same. This would allow the border to stay open, without the need for checks. In essence, it promised that if the fairy tales failed, reality would take over, on a strict timetable.

The plan was Mrs May's baby. She negotiated it. She even demanded that it be extended from Northern Ireland to the whole United Kingdom. But it was just too much bleak practical reality for the Brexiters. So when she brought it to the House of Commons almost three weeks ago, lawmakers smashed it into a million pieces, with a historic government defeat.

After she reeled for a couple of weeks, Tuesday night saw Mrs May finally regain some sort of initiative: She grabbed hold of an amendment floating around by Conservative lawmaker Graham

Brady and tried to use it to her advantage.

It was a very strange and pointless amendment. It said, in a not legally binding manner, that Parliament would back the Brexit deal if "alternative arrangements" were found for the backstop.

What were these alternative arrangements? How do you promise to keep a border open while simultaneously not promising to keep a border open?

Mr Brady couldn't say. Neither could the Prime Minister nor any other member of her government.

They had no idea what they were doing. They just needed some words, any words, that could win majority support in the Commons.

The fact that the specific words they chose made no sense was an advantage. If the amendment had made sense, someone would have taken offence at its implications.

This is the logic of fairy tale politics. The most common idea among Brexiters is that they will use "high-tech solutions" to remove the need for checks at the border. But the technology they are wishing for does not exist anywhere on earth. It is science fiction.

Not only did Mr Brady's proposition have no meaning, it was common knowledge before it was voted on that it could not be delivered.

The EU has closed the talks on the withdrawal agreement. It has made it quite clear that they cannot be reopened. And even if they could, the backstop took nearly two years to negotiate. There are only two months left before Britain leaves the EU. That's not enough time to do whatever it was lawmakers voted for on Tuesday night.

That's what made the debate so truly pitiful. It was a return to the world of fairy tales and hallucinations, of the kind of quasi-religious nationalist politics that have fuelled the Brexit project from the start. British politicians were confronted with reality and given a chance to fix the problems with Brexit instead of pretending there weren't any, and they once again fled back into myth-making.

The country is now on the verge of disaster. On March 29, unless something is done, Britain will fall out of the European Union without a deal. That will affect every aspect of the economy.

It's likely to block haulage cargo at the border; pulverise agricultural exports; trigger shortages of food, medicine and radioactive isotopes; spark employment chaos by suddenly cancelling the mutual recognition of qualifications between British and European institutions; halt the legal basis for data transfer overnight; and lead to massive and sudden flows of immigration in both directions.

The list goes on and on. There is no part of society that is unaffected. And yet not only does the British political class not seem to understand the consequences of what it is doing, it is lost in populist fantasies instead of addressing the cold reality.

Britain is one of the richest and most advanced democracies in the world. It is currently locked in a room, babbling away to itself hysterically while threatening to blow its own kneecaps off. This is what nationalist populism does to a country. WASHINGTON POST

• Ian Dunt is the editor of politics.co.uk and the author of Brexit: What The Hell Happens Now?

France has millions of Muslims. Why does it import imams?

Kamel Daoud

PARIS • What to do about Islam in France? Considering Islamist terrorist attacks, communalism and the international manipulation of Muslim communities, the matter is pressing. But it's contentious, because managing Islam seems to go against laicite, France's staunch version of state secularism, and a 1905 law that mandates the separation of church and state.

Wouldn't revising that law be an admission that secularism is bowing to Islamism? On the other hand, if the law isn't revised, or if the French state cannot find other ways of monitoring and steering Islam, then Islam in France risks falling under the control of foreign states or the influence of radicals. That is already the case, actually: Since laicite prohibits the French authorities from using public funds to build mosques or train imams, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have stepped in. According to the news magazine L'Express, 70 per cent of imams practising in France are not French.

To overcome these paradoxes, President Emmanuel Macron recently convened at the Elysee Palace the country's various Muslim leaders and then representatives from all religions. The order of the day for the broader meeting, held on Jan 10, was old emergencies: How to punish radicalism, control the financing of mosques and make the Muslim authorities accountable. The news daily Le Monde, which obtained the note that the President handed to attendees, reported that the government was proposing to revise the 1905 law while "confirming" "its principles".

It was an attempt to square a circle. And the narrower question of what to do about imams – their origins, their training, their salaries – summarises it well.

It's virtually impossible to tally imams in France. No one really knows how many there are, partly because the collection of data based on ethnic or religious grounds is prohibited. The last available estimates from the Interior Ministry – which date back to 2012 – put the number of mosques in France at around 2,500. (A 2016 report by the Senate said it was closer to 3,000.) But those figures are as outdated today as they were imprecise in the first place: What even counts as a "mosque" when so many Muslim believers gather in the basements of low-income building complexes or other improvised prayer halls? And there being 2,500 mosques doesn't mean there are 2,500 imams: In Sunni Islam, the version of Islam most prevalent in France, anyone can declare oneself an imam and volunteer to lead prayers.

There is no central authority overseeing Islam in France. How do you supervise the mosques you don't fund or imams you can't pay?

For the time being, France, for lack of its own theological schools, has favoured filtered immigration: It brings in imams from abroad, mostly from the home countries of its main immigrant communities. Paradoxically, a justification for this policy – though rarely admitted publicly – is security: It seems less risky to rely on an official imam from Algeria than let a self-proclaimed imam emerge in a Paris banlieue, or suburb. For example, Algerian imams wishing to go to France must first undergo investigations. And as the Algerian government puts it, modestly, the "Algerian expertise" in security matters ensures quality vetting.

Last year, Algeria sent approximately 100 imams to officiate in France. Morocco and Tunisia contributed about as many each. In 2017, L'Express ran the headline "Morocco, the factory of French imams", with an article on imam-apprentices, some sent from France, whom the kingdom was training in how to dispense "middle-ground" Islam before dispatching them abroad. According to news weekly Le Point, Turkish "consular structures" oversee over 250 mosques and about 200 official imams seconded by Turkey to France. The filtered import of foreign imams may look like a good practical solution; in fact, it's an ideological trap. These imams, even if acting in good faith, can only reinforce communalism in France and work against

integration, because they are not French. In the name of laicite, France is dangerously delegating its Islam to other states.

Those states benefit. For the Algerian government, the export of imams seems to confirm a return to stability. Saudi Arabia sees proselytising as a form of soft power. So does Turkey, which seems invested in maintaining a religious lobby abroad.

The stakes are high, apparently. When last year the Austrian government expelled about 60 Turkish preachers to counter, it said, the creation of "parallel societies" and "political Islam", Turkey called the move "racist" and "Islamophobic". When the French government said it wanted to create a distinct "Islam of France", Algeria – speaking indirectly, via an expert's op-ed in state media – accused it of "arrogance tinted with ignorance".

The import of imams, the foreign financing of mosques – these delegations of power by the French authorities are a dead end: They won't do enough to stem radicalism in France; they will do even less to nurture the emergence of, precisely, an Islam of France.

The President's office seems to want to overcome all this. But some participants in that first meeting convened by Mr Macron at the beginning of the year reacted with calculated anger before accepting the invitation. Members of the French Council of the Muslim Faith decried the "colonial administration of Islam". It's a clever conflation: By invoking colonialism, they can leverage guilt as a bargaining chip while maintaining Islam's communal valence. Why do that? For fear of losing power if France develops a sui generis form of Islam. Harping on Muslims' status as a once-colonised group is a way of highlighting their ties to their countries of origin, over those to their host country.

Past attempts to create Muslim councils – the Great Mosque of Paris, the Federation of French Muslims, the Union of Islamic Organisations in France (also known as Muslims of France) – that could effectively represent France's various Muslim communities have failed. A reason is the rivalry among the groups' leaders, different confessional strands and foreign governments with ties to immigrant communities. Algeria competes with Morocco, and both compete with Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

As the journalist Henri Tincq has pointed out on Slate.fr, the Paris Mosque is "loyal to Algeria", the Federation of French Muslims has "ties to the Muslim World League and Morocco" and the Union of Islamic Organisations in France is "close to the Muslim Brotherhood".

It's hard to separate Islam from its community and the community from its country of origin without being accused of interference. Whenever the French government tries to manage Islam in France, Algeria says it's meddling, when in saying so, it is Algeria that is meddling in France's affairs. So what can be done? One solution has been put forward by Hakim El Karoui, an international consultant close to Mr Macron and the author of the recent report The Islamist Factory and, in 2016, of A French Islam Is Possible.

First, he recommends strictly supervising external financing or informal funds collected in mosques, neighbourhoods or local associations. He also suggests creating an independent fund for training imams by taxing halal businesses, money collected through the Muslim alms known as zakat and commerce around the pilgrimage to Mecca. Those are good for keeping state and church, or cult, separate while integrating French Muslims into France.

But just what should be uniting is proving divisive: His proposals are controversial, notably for the French Council of the Muslim Faith. One of its vice-presidents called them an "insult" to Islam and accused him of conflating Islam and Islamism. That reaction sums up well the endless-seeming debate between those who want to maintain a monopoly over Islam in France and those who wish to develop an Islam of France. NYTIMES

• Kamel Daoud is a contributing opinion writer and the author of Chroniques: Selected Columns, 2010-2016 and the novel, The Meursault Investigation. This essay was translated by The New York Times from the French.

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 33 deg C **Low** 24 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 22 to 51 (Moderate)



PHOTO: FACEBOOK/RIZMAN PUTRA

S'pore art chopes a spot in Paris

Singapore's "chope" culture – personified in the way Singaporeans reserve hawker centre seats with tissue paper packets – has been taken to Paris as a work of art.

Dressed up as a life-size tissue packet, artist Rizman Putra has been drawing amused looks from visitors to the ongoing Urban Art Singapore exhibition in the French capital.

Titled C(HOPE), the art installation centres on the theme of possession and belonging to a territory, says exhibition curator Iman Ismail.

C(HOPE) is one of several works of art by 13 artists at the exhibition, which is held at the Valmy Showroom Republique till Feb 17.

The exhibition is organised by the Singapore Embassy in Paris and Urban Art Fair.



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B| HOME

GLOBAL WARMING IN DEGREE CELSIUS THAT WILL RISK AN ICE-LESS ARCTIC IN THE SUMMER EVERY 100 YEARS B2

Walking into history



It was a Sunday morning walk of discovery for 36 people on the new heritage walking tour in the historical Queenstown and Dawson areas. One of the 12 stops on the free monthly tour is Princess House in Alexandra Road. The conserved house was opened in 1957 and used to house offices such as the first dedicated headquarters for the Housing and Development Board. The My Dawson Heritage Tour, which kicked off yesterday, is run by volunteer group My Community and was conceptualised in conjunction with Singapore's bicentennial celebrations. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO [SEE HOME B6](#)

Brakes put on three of six bike-sharing companies

One has returned licence, another yet to put out bikes, LTA threatens to suspend the third

Toh Ting Wei

Three of the six operators licensed to run dockless bike-sharing operations since last October have failed to take off, as questions swirl over the industry's long-term viability.

Chinese bike-sharing giant ofo's future is now hanging by a thread. It has breached multiple regulatory requirements, and the Land Transport Authority (LTA) has threatened to suspend its licence. Ofo has yet to surrender its licence, but reports have emerged on the closure of its overseas business units.

Today Online reported last week that ofo's operations team laid off nine or 10 employees, and owed its creditors at least \$700,000.

Meanwhile, GrabCycle has surrendered its sandbox licence to focus on shared electric scooters.

Qiqi Zhixiang has yet to deploy

any bicycles as of last month, and its app is nowhere to be found online.

The remaining three licensed operators in business are Mobike, SG Bike and Anywheel. They operate a combined fleet of 29,000 bicycles – about 70 per cent of the total fleet initially approved by the LTA.

But experts caution that it remains unclear how these remaining companies can find a sustainable business model. They note that the challenges faced by the industry are not just localised, with shared-bike firms worldwide generally operating at massive losses that were previously offset by cash-rich backers.

Singapore University of Social Sciences transport economist Walter Theseira said: "It's the cheap financing drying up. When the tide goes out, you see who's been swimming naked, as they say."

[BIKE-SHARING BLUES](#) continued on B2



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Making The Best of Budget 2019

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A Resilient Outlook?

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RHB Investment Bank



The Key Tax Takeaways

Allison Cheung
Tax Partner, PwC Singapore



Panelist

Vikram Khanna
Associate Editor, The Straits Times



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STAGE PROGRAMME

TIME	25 FEB 2019 (Monday)	26 FEB 2019 (Tuesday)	27 FEB 2019 (Wednesday)
11.00pm to 12.00pm		NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd
12.00pm to 1.00pm	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Core for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Core for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Core for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness
1.00pm to 2.00pm	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	DR. HOU & LING Double Extracts Diamond White Essence by Jing Rui Biotechnology - Cai En International Ltd
2.00pm to 3.00pm	The Most Advanced Reproduction Beauty in Japan by Beauty Planning Inc.	TOKI SKIN: The Japanese Way to Naturally Beautiful, Porcelain Skin by Lit Botanica Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd
3.00pm to 4.00pm	Miraculous Non Surgical Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	DR. HOU & LING LIPOFORM Bust Plus Lotion by Jing Rui Biotechnology - Cai En International Ltd	Your Skills Your Future: Latest Government Subsidy Beauty Courses 2019 by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd
4.00pm to 5.00pm	NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd	The Myth of Japanese Cosmetics, 'NAHLS' by Deep Impact Co., Ltd.	NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd
5.00pm to 6.00pm	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Miraculous Non Surgical Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	Self-Defence Power - Our Body's Inherent Ability to Heal by Nature Produce
6.00pm to 7.00pm	Self-Defence Power - Our Body's Inherent Ability to Heal by Nature Produce	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

TIME	25 FEB 2019 (Monday)	26 FEB 2019 (Tuesday)	27 FEB 2019 (Wednesday)
11.30pm to 12.30pm	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd		
12.30pm to 1.30pm	7 Minutes Miracle Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	7 Minutes Miracle Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	
1.30pm to 2.30pm	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd
2.30pm to 3.30pm	The Best Body Contouring Tech of Both Worlds: NobleShape with LD+AMF+RF by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd	Add a Whole New Dimension to your Aesthetic Treatment Plan! AGASSI - The Latest RF Smile Lifting & Vaginal Tightening Concept! by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd	Bio-Jet - The Next Generation of Needle-Free Transdermal Drug Delivery Concept! by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd
3.30pm to 4.30pm	2 Weeks to Brighter, Even and Younger Looking Skin with the Power of Po3™. The Light Serum by 28Cubed by NamZ Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd
4.30pm to 5.30pm		5 Most Effective Meridian Point for Natural Face Lifting by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd	5 Most Effective Meridian Point for Natural Face Lifting by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd

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FIRE & ICE

How the poles affect tropical climates

S'pore could feel impact of sea-level rise, earth absorbing more heat and changes in global weather patterns

Audrey Tan
Environment Correspondent

Tropical Singapore is poles apart from the Arctic in distance and climate. But the icy realms of the world could affect the tropics in far more ways than many think, said scientists at a conference on arctic issues in Tromsø, Norway, last month.

As the world warms, melting ice is causing sea levels to rise. Ice loss is also causing the planet to absorb more of the sun's heat, as a result of the disappearance of its icy reflective "shield". These point to the vulnerability of the region and the implications that the changes would have on the world.

Citing a recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (IPCC), Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment Ola Elvestuen said at the conference that a warming of 1.5 deg C will risk an ice-free Arctic in the summer every 100 years. "That is serious and disturbing enough. With a 2 deg C warming, we risk it every 10th year," he added.

The IPCC report, released last October, highlighted the differences in the impact of a 1.5 deg C global warming scenario versus a 2 deg C one, with the latter having catastrophic effects on earth systems, human livelihoods and biodiversity.

The urgency in limiting global warming to 1.5 deg C is clear. If this is achieved, the risk of reaching critical tipping points in the global climate system will be much lower, said Mr Elvestuen.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Recent scientific reports on various aspects of global warming underscore the importance of the discussions at the Tromsø conference.

Last month, an article in scientific journal *Science* noted that the oceans were heating up 40 per cent faster on average than what scientists estimated five years ago, reported *The New York Times*.

Two separate papers published in December and last month also documented the accelerating rates of ice melt at the Greenland and antarctica ice sheets.

The science clearly points to human activity as driving these global changes. But what is the impact on Singapore?

Professor Benjamin Horton, principal investigator at the Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) Earth Observatory of Singapore, said: "The large-scale changes that take place in the arctic climate system exert a strong influence on the

STRONG IMPACT

The large-scale changes that take place in the arctic climate system exert a strong influence on the global climate system.



PROFESSOR BENJAMIN HORTON, principal investigator at the Nanyang Technological University's Earth Observatory of Singapore. The impact on Singapore can broadly be classified into three main categories:

- Sea-level rise;
- Heat gain due to the loss of a planetary icy "shield";
- Changes in global circulation patterns.

global climate system."

Their impact on Singapore, said Prof Horton, who is also one of the review editors of the upcoming Sixth Assessment Report by the IPCC, can broadly be classified into three main categories: sea-level rise, heat gain due to the loss of a planetary icy "shield", and changes in global circulation patterns.

Already, Singapore is feeling the impact of global warming.

It is experiencing a long-term trend of warming, with last year being the Republic's eighth-warmest year on record, said the Meteorological Service Singapore.

SEA-LEVEL RISE

Singapore's Second National Climate Change Study has shown that the mean sea level is estimated to rise by up to 1m by 2100.

There are a few ways global warming could cause this. The first is the thermal expansion of water, which expands when heated. This has been the biggest contributor to sea-level rise so far, said Prof Horton.

And, in view of recent findings on ocean warming, this effect is expected to continue to contribute up to 50 per cent of the rise in sea levels in years to come, he added.

And just as how adding ice cubes to a glass of water raises water levels, melting land ice would also substantially contribute to sea-level rise. Most of this water is now locked in the world's ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica. If they were both to melt completely, sea levels would go up by about 65m, said the IPCC.

Scientists say this would take thousands of years at the current rates of warming. But the impact on Singapore in this doomsday scenario would be worse than the global average, said Prof Horton.

SPORE'S STRATEGIES continued on B3



Singapore is already feeling the impact of global warming. It is experiencing a long-term trend of warming, with last year being the Republic's eighth-warmest year on record, says the Meteorological Service Singapore. Furthermore, Singapore's Second National Climate Change Study has shown that the mean sea level is estimated to rise by up to 1m by 2100. ST FILE PHOTO

Running into obstacles, rivalry from e-scooters

FROM B1

The unwillingness of commuters to pay higher fees for shared bikes is a challenge, said Dr Elliot Fishman from the Institute For Sensible Transport in Australia. "With all the competition among bike-sharing firms, no commuter wants to pay a lot of money for shared bikes."

Former operators such as oBike and ShareBikeSG have cited regulation as another obstacle here.

The LTA has stepped in with its licensing regime to tackle the problem of rampant indiscriminate parking of shared bikes, which were estimated to number more than 100,000 at one point.

LTA requires operators to comply with a set of rules. Those with a full licence have to pay a \$30 annual fee and a \$30 refundable security deposit per bike. Smaller players can apply for a sandbox licence, which

has a fee of \$12 per bike.

Mr R.J. Seet, strategy manager of Anywheel, which has a sandbox licence to operate 1,000 bikes, said the new regulations could potentially deter customers, who have to take an additional step to end their ride at a designated parking area.

SG Bike, which has a full licence to operate 3,000 bikes, said it translated into higher operation costs.

An LTA spokesman acknowledged operators will incur some costs, but said the new rules are necessary for the "sustainable and responsible growth" of the industry.

Shared-bike operators are also set to face additional competition, in the form of shared e-scooters.

Some companies believe such devices would be more popular than bicycles. That is why Grab has pivoted from bikes to e-scooters, which it said have "a stronger fit in Singapore due to the humid

weather and limited land space".

Still, local start-ups SG Bike and Anywheel remain optimistic.

SG Bike has seen consistent growth in the usage of its bikes in the past few months, according to its marketing director Benjamin Oh. He declined to give specific figures, for competitive reasons.

He added that the Government's push for a car-lite society and ongoing infrastructure improvements, such as building more bicycle paths, mean bicycles could become a more popular mode of transport.

Anywheel believes that the current supply of shared bicycles does not meet the demand. It thus plans to apply for a full licence and expand its fleet to 10,000.

But Dr Theseira said the road ahead may not be as smooth as some hope. "Everybody agrees that it might be useful to have some kind of shared short-range transport system, but that is different from the question of whether you can get people to pay for it," he said.

"If you can solve the financing problem, then okay, fine. But right now, nobody has cracked that yet."

twtoh@sph.com.sg

Six hurt as car hits tree; driver arrested

Six people were taken to hospital after a car accident in Punggol yesterday morning.

The police said they were alerted to the accident involving three pedestrians in Punggol Central, towards Sumang Lane, at 8.48am.

The driver and two passengers were among the six, aged between 29 and 65, taken to Khoo Teck Puat Hospital. The 63-year-old driver was later arrested for causing hurt by a negligent act, the police said.

Engineer Koh Chek Kian told *The Straits Times* that he saw the car breach the kerb and hit a tree at high speed. "It then swerved 90 degrees, and its tail hit three people on the road island who were waiting to cross the road," he said.

Passers-by and churchgoers from the nearby Church of the Transfiguration ran over to help.

One injured woman was trapped under the car and had to be rescued by Singapore Civil Defence Force officers using hydraulic tools.

Mr Koh, 48, said the woman's leg



The car's front and hood were severely damaged and bent out of shape after the vehicle breached the kerb and crashed into the tree in Punggol yesterday. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

was trapped under a wheel of the car and bleeding profusely. He said some passers-by used some of their clothing to help stem the bleeding.

The driver and his two passengers were bleeding from cuts and abrasions on their arms, Mr Koh said.

He added that one of the passengers was an elderly woman crying out in pain. "She was slumped over in the centre part of the car. I had to help her out... She said she was very

dizzy and her right leg felt numb." Videos provided by Mr Koh show several people at the site, with the car on the road divider.

A photo taken by Chinese-language daily *Lianhe Wanbao* shows the car's front and hood severely damaged and bent out of shape from its impact with the tree. The police are investigating the incident.

Tee Zhuo

What cools the world

As the world warms, the earth faces the risk of losing its ice. This could have many implications for Singapore. **The Straits Times** speaks to Ms Margaret Lindeman, a doctoral candidate studying glacier-ocean interactions at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, to learn more about the cryosphere, and the role of ice in the climate system.

MAIN TYPES OF ICE

Sea ice

What it is

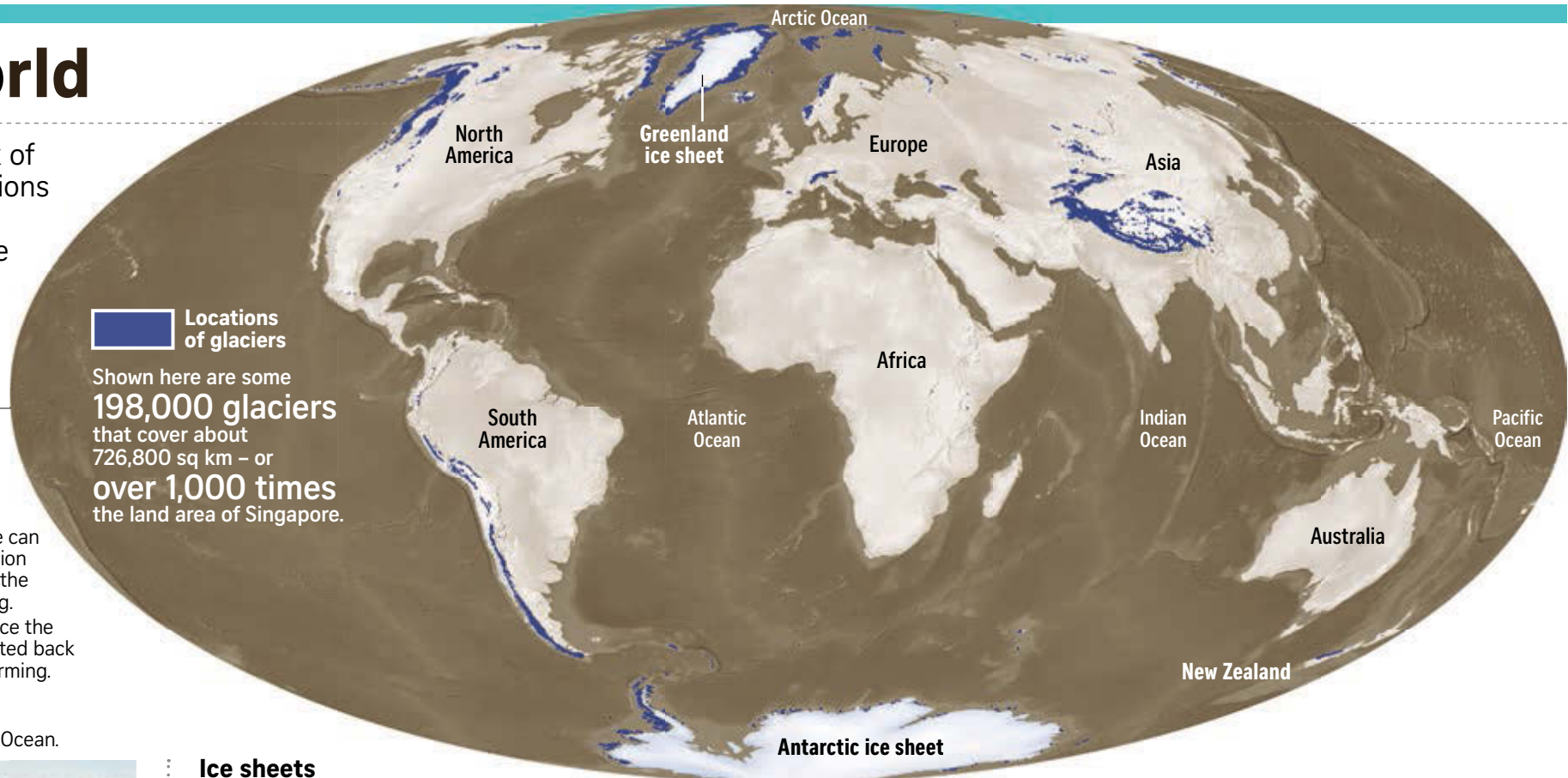
- Formed when air cools the ocean below its freezing point.
- Just as how the water level in a glass of frozen water does not change when the water melts, melting sea ice does not have an impact on sea-level rise.
- But it still plays a crucial role in the climate system due to its reflective capabilities. Called the

ice-albedo feedback, sea ice can reflect incoming solar radiation back into space, preventing the earth's surface from warming.

- Melting sea ice could reduce the amount of heat being reflected back into space, exacerbating warming.

Where it can be found

In places such as the Arctic Ocean.



Arctic sea ice as seen from a South Korean icebreaker in August last year.

Glaciers

What they are

Glaciers are also land ice that, like ice sheets, are formed through the compaction of snow.

Where they can be found

- In many places around the world, including in northern Asia.
- Surprisingly, the key season that determines the formation of glaciers is summer, not winter. If the rate of ice melt in summer is lower than snow fall in winter, glaciers are likely to form.
- This condition means glaciers usually form in the polar regions or in mountainous areas.



Franz Josef Glacier on New Zealand's South Island dwarfs visitors.

Ice sheets

What they are

Ice sheets, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Centre, are land ice that are at least 50,000 sq km.

Where they can be found

- There are only two ice sheets in the world - the Greenland ice sheet, formed about three million years ago, and the Antarctica ice sheet at about 34 million years old.
- Scientists estimate that if both ice sheets were to melt completely, global sea levels will go up by about 65m.

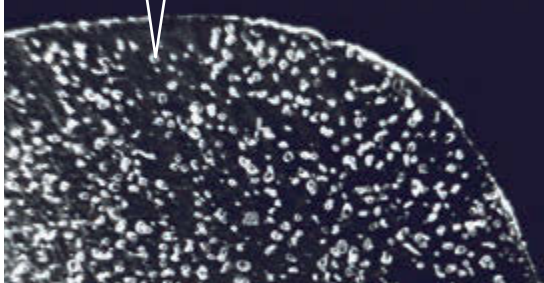
Hiawatha impact crater covered by the Greenland ice sheet.



Ice cores

As snow accumulates on land and gets compacted into ice, it holds within its layers clues to earth's climate in the past.

Ancient air, trapped in bubbles in the ice, allows scientists to measure how carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere have changed over the past 800,000 years.



IMPLICATIONS FOR SINGAPORE

Shipping hub status

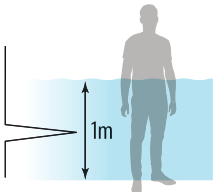
Melting sea ice in the Arctic could threaten Singapore's position as a global shipping hub if the Northern Sea Route is opened all year round, shaving 30 per cent off travel time via the conventional Suez Canal-Malacca Strait route.



Sea-level rise

- The melting of glaciers and ice sheets has the potential to cause sea-level rise.

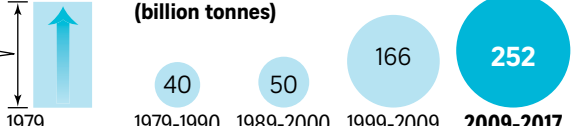
- Singapore's Second National Climate Change Study has projected mean sea level in the Republic to go up by about 1m by 2100.



Antarctic ice loss

Antarctic ice loss has raised global sea levels 1.4cm since 1979

Antarctic ice loss per year



Sources: MARGARET LINDEMAN, NATIONAL SNOW AND ICE DATA CENTRE, NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION ICE CORE FACILITY, ST FILE PHOTOS: NASA EARTH OBSERVATORY, TOURISM NEW ZEALAND, AFP, COURTESY OF JACOB MORGAN | STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Impact of warming on earth's icy shield, weather patterns

FROM B2

Ice sheets are large blocks of ice that extend at least 50,000 sq km, as defined by the National Snow and Ice Data Centre. Their large masses allow them to attract ocean waters towards them, raising surrounding sea levels.

"If an ice sheet melts, its gravitational attraction decreases and sea levels around it can go down," said Prof Horton. "Conversely, regions far from a melting ice sheet, such as Singapore, will see a rise in sea level greater than the global average."

But apart from ice sheets, the contribution of glaciers - smaller blocks of land ice - to sea-level rise should not be ignored, said Professor Ben Marzeion, a climate scientist at the Institute of Geography at the University of Bremen, Germany.

His research found that melted glaciers caused sea levels to rise by

between 106mm and 137mm in 2015, compared with 1901 levels.

"Glaciers will contribute to future sea-level rise no matter what we do, but future warming will determine melt rates, which will decide how much time countries have to adapt," he told **The Straits Times** during the conference in Norway.

This, he said, is because glaciers are much smaller than ice sheets. "A large block of ice would take much longer to melt compared with a smaller piece," he said.

EARTH'S ICY SHIELD

Global warming could also cause earth's icy "shield" to melt. This results in an increase in the amount of heat absorbed by the planet, exacerbating the warming trend.

The whiteness of the snow-covered poles makes them a lot more reflective compared with earth's other surfaces, such as the ocean or

forest covers.

"Snow regulates our planet's energy balance, reflecting 85 per cent of incoming solar radiation back into space," said a group of scientists from institutions such as the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Norwegian Polar Institute in a recent paper in journal *Nature Climate Change*.

The ability of ice to reflect heat and reduce surface warming is known as the ice-albedo feedback.

Said Prof Horton: "An ice-covered Arctic reflects solar radiation which otherwise would be absorbed by the oceans and cause the earth's surface to heat up. But when more ice and snow melt, there will be more dark surfaces. This is a self-reinforcing effect."

CIRCULATION PATTERNS

Professor Tor Eldevik, deputy direc-

tor of the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research at the University of Bergen, Norway, said melting ice could, in theory, affect the ocean's ability to transport heat around the planet.

This phenomenon is still under study, but may have the potential to cause changes in northern hemisphere weather patterns.

Under normal conditions, warm water from the tropics surges towards the Arctic, where it cools, becomes denser and sinks, before flowing back south. This is known as the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation. Its warm, north-bound current helps make winters in western Europe more bearable, while the cooler, south-flowing branch helps remove carbon from the atmosphere.

But in a warming world, an influx of fresh water from melting ice could reduce the density of the wa-

ter in the high north, reduce the sinking, and weaken the oceanic "conveyor belt".

While there have been scientific studies showing a decline in the strength of this circulation since around 1970, Prof Eldevik said it may still be too soon to say, as there are observational studies that suggest otherwise.

"It is a big question now how climate change will affect this circulation, if it will bring warm water further into the Arctic and cause more sea ice to melt or if it will cause the arctic shelves to melt," he said.

Both melting sea ice and land ice could change the density of sea water substantially and alter the circulation.

"However, current contributions from this melting are, in my opinion, not of sufficient magnitude to cause such change," said Prof Eldevik.

Changes at the poles have the potential to cause global changes in climate, but NTU's Prof Horton said Singapore's biggest challenge would be dealing with sea-level rise.

While the process could take thousands of years, earth's rapid rates of warming could bring this forward.

Singapore is aware of this threat and is taking steps to safeguard the country, said Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sam Tan.

In 2011, for example, the authorities here raised the minimum reclamation level to at least 4m above mean sea level, an increase of 1m.

Selected roads, such as Changi Coast Road and Nicoll Drive, have also been raised to reduce the impact of flooding. To mitigate coastal erosion, seawalls and rock slopes near the coasts have also been installed.

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TODAY IN

联合早报

LIANKE ZAOBAO

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HOME INFOCUS

(From left) Mr. Asari Rafie with his wife Hadijah Adnan, 60; Madam Chan Kieu; Madam Ong Bock Hoe (partially hidden); Madam Tee Sek Eng, 65 (partially hidden); Madam Kamisah Atan (partially hidden); and Madam Rosemary Ong, 58, tossing yusheng, also known as lohei, at the roof garden last month.
ST PHOTOS: DESMOND WEE



60

Number of active volunteers at the Sky Garden @ Jurong Central.

2,000

Size of the community garden in sq m. It is located on the rooftop of a multi-storey carpark.

100

Number of types of vegetable, fruit and ornamental flower plants the community garden has.

(From left) Madam Ong Bock Hoe, Madam Kamisah Atan and Madam Rosemary Ong preparing nian gao using tapioca and yam from the garden; they then wrap it in popiah skin and fry it.



Edible flowers for lohei such as roses, torenia, wild cosmos and butterfly-pea flowers being placed on banana leaves for a plate of yusheng. The Chinese New Year dish is for a party for volunteers of the community garden, Sky Garden @ Jurong Central.



(From left) Madam Rosemary Ong; Madam Aileen Karim, 69; Madam Chan Kieu; Madam Tee Sek Eng; Madam Ong Bock Hoe; Madam Hadijah Adnan; Madam Hajjah Hamidah, 74; and Mr. Asari Rafie preparing for their Chinese New Year party.



Madam Lau Suan, 66, watering lettuce at the Sky Garden @ Jurong Central. The garden was started in 2002 but had to make way for a multi-storey carpark. The garden reopened in 2012 and sits atop the carpark.



Madam Kamisah Atan covering plants with a net to prevent pests and birds from pecking at the seedlings and destroying them. She heads the community garden that she started in 2002.

HARVESTING FOR CHINESE NEW YEAR

Urban farmers bond over dishes made from the fruit of their labour at community garden



Rachel Quik
Multimedia Journalist



Desmond Wee
Executive Photojournalist

The sounds of children laughing from a nearby primary school fills the air. At 7am, Madam Ong Bock Hoe peers over the rooftop railing to watch the pupils chase one another at a basketball court below.

She changes into her boots, picks up a pair of scissors, and examines a paper lantern that she made from Chinese New Year hongbao.

The 72-year-old housewife is one of 60 active volunteers at the Sky Garden @ Jurong Central.

The 2,000 sq m community garden located on the rooftop of a multi-storey carpark has more than 100 types of vegetable, fruit and ornamental flower plants.

The Straits Times dropped in on these urban farmers harvesting their crops on a recent weekday.

Madam Kamisah Atan, 61, who heads the community garden that she started in 2002, has organised a Chinese New Year party for volunteers.

When there were plans to build a multi-storey carpark where the garden was, she requested that the garden be moved to the carpark's rooftop.

The garden reopened in 2012.

Madam Kamisah, a housewife, picks some edible roses, wild cosmos and torenia flowers, and arranges them on a plate of yusheng.

At the back of the garden pond, part-time cabby Asari Rafie, 70, catches a pair of tilapia fish. There are portable stoves and pans for the volunteers to cook their own food.

Mr Asari deep-fries the fish after marinating it with turmeric and curry powder, and sets it on a banana leaf next to a steaming dish of fish and ladies' fingers doused with fermented black-bean sauce cooked by Madam Chan Kieu.

Madam Chan, 78, carries her dish to the table, exclaiming "nian nian you yu" - which means "a year filled with abundance" in Mandarin. A few steps away, Madam Ong fries her homemade nian gao with yam and sweet potatoes.

Photographs of past potluck parties fill the walls at the entrance of the Sky Garden. The seniors enjoy coming to the garden to exercise, make friends and relive their childhood memories farming in the kampung. For Madam Ong, she comes to the garden for something more. "I love the sunlight here."

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Celebrating CNY with fruits of their labour



SCAN TO WATCH



http://str.sg/lohei



Madam Kamisah Atan harvesting snake gourd, with the help of Madam Rosemary Ong, seen at left plucking a banana leaf big and nice enough to line a plate of yusheng.

PM brings festive cheer to Teck Ghee residents

Grace Leong
Business Correspondent

For Madam Gena Tan, yesterday's visit by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to Teck Ghee market to exchange Chinese New Year greetings with and distribute red packets to residents and stall owners held special significance.

This is because PM Lee had attended her mother Sim Chiu Hong's wake when she died suddenly at age 73 of a heart attack two years ago, around the time he was to have visited the market.

"He had posted on Facebook that he was giving hongbao at Teck Ghee market, and I had responded

that my mother had been looking forward to taking pictures with him, but she suddenly passed on.

"A residents' committee member then told us Mr Lee was coming to pay his respects. He is very kind," said Madam Tan, whose family's Choon Kooi provision shop has been operating in the market for around 40 years.

Teck Ghee is in Ang Mo Kio GRC, where PM Lee is a Member of Parliament.

"It was a comfort seeing him during our difficult time two years ago," she told The Straits Times yesterday after PM Lee visited the market and stopped by her shop. "He always asks how we are doing."

PM Lee yesterday also visited

Teck Ghee Community Club, where around 470 senior residents in the Teck Ghee Division got a head start on the Chinese New Year celebrations as he exchanged festive greetings with them and handed out hongbao, bottles of chicken essence and mandarin oranges.

Each senior resident received a hongbao, which contained \$150 cash and a Sheng Siong supermarket gift voucher worth \$50.

Ms Suzie Ng, 72, who has polio and uses a wheelchair, said PM Lee has done quite a lot for people who are disabled, in terms of housing and building ramps for them.

Ms Apple Tan's baby clothes shop BellaBaBy.sg Handpicked By Moms also received an unexpected visit from Mrs Lee, who accompanied PM Lee yesterday.

"It is my first time seeing Mrs Lee here," said Ms Tan, 55, whose shop opened at the market about a year ago. "She bought two baby cheongsam jumpers – a pink one, and a blue and yellow one."

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Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong greeting a stall owner during a visit yesterday to Teck Ghee market in Ang Mo Kio, where he met residents and stall owners to exchange New Year greetings and give out red packets. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO



My Dawson Heritage Tour participants taking in the view at the sky garden on the 47th floor of Skyville@Dawson yesterday. The tour features research done by volunteer group My Community, which runs the tour, and insights from past and present residents in the area. ST PHOTOS: GAVIN FOO

Queenstown and Dawson history on display in new tour

Free, four-hour guided walk organised in conjunction with bicentennial celebrations

Hariz Baharudin

Discover more about Singapore's colonial roots and early history with a free guided tour of the historical Dawson and Queenstown areas.

Organised in conjunction with Singapore's bicentennial celebrations this year, the four-hour My Dawson Heritage Tour is a monthly tour run by volunteer group My Community.

To be conducted every first Saturday and Sunday of the month, the first session of the 5.6km tour was held yesterday with 36 participants.

On the tour, volunteers will take participants to areas such as the Tanglin barracks that the British built for soldiers in 1861; the Chatsworth Park Conservation Area, where British and American companies put up their staff in the early 1990s; and the Phoenix Park complex that was constructed by the British in 1949 to house several key institutions.

My Community founder and president Kwek Li Yong said the tour features not just the research his group has done, but also insights

from past and present residents in the area.

He said: "Our popular guided tours are heavily curated with sensory cues that evoke the past, layered with personal accounts and experiences which took place on site."

"My Dawson Heritage Tour forms a convergence between collective memories and individual biographies, and is essential to how we interpret and negotiate our colonial past through familiarity, sensory recollection and community ownership."

The tour is one of eight that My Community organises, but is the first one it has done to commemorate Singapore's bicentennial.

An MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC, Dr Chia Shi-Lu, said: "The bicentennial tour at Dawson comprises landmarks and experiences which serve as visual and experiential reminders of how our colonial past is engaged in embodied meanings."

One of the tour's 12 stops is the site of the 1955 Hock Lee Bus Riots.

The riots, which began as a peaceful demonstration by bus drivers from the Hock Lee Amalgamated Bus Company, turned violent when riot police attempted to break it up.

Two police officers were killed and hundreds of protesters injured.

The historic Phoenix Park complex is another highlight of the tour. According to My Community, the Ministry of Home Affairs' Internal Security Department used the site to investigate numerous cases.

When The Straits Times joined the tour yesterday, there was a mix of Dawson and Queenstown residents, and people from other neighbourhoods.

Retiree Priscilla Yee, 57, travelled from Bedok for the tour after reading about it online. It allowed her to walk down memory lane as she spent the first 12 years of her life in the area before moving out.

Said Madam Yee: "It is wonderful to revisit the places I used to go to,



On the tour, volunteers will take participants to sites such as St George's Church in Harding Road (above) and old colonial buildings previously used by the British military in Loewen Cluster (below) near Tanglin Road.



as there are not many reasons for me to come to this area. The tour is very well done and informative; even though I grew up here, I am learning many things about this place that I never knew."

Miss Lee Hui Fang, 35, a Queenstown resident, joined the tour and told stories about growing up in the area to other tour group members.

The acupressure instructor said she felt compelled to share her experiences after finding out about the work that My Community did.

"When we travel to other coun-

tries, we always tell people about the stories from that place, why should it be different from the place we live?" she said.

"Buildings can age or be demolished, but stories are what keeps places alive. By sharing my stories of growing up here, I can help to keep this Queenstown area alive."

Those keen on going for the tour, which can take 50 participants each time, can sign up at www.mycommunity.eventbrite.sg

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Ties that bind



Some patrons of Chinatown Complex Food Centre yesterday received oranges from volunteers from the People's Association Malay Activity Executive Committees Council (Mesra), led by Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Social and Family Development and Education Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim. In total, 388 bags of oranges were distributed by around 30 volunteers, who also attended a talk by the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations on Chinese customs and traditions. Dr Faishal, adviser to Mesra, said these initiatives were a good way to deepen intercultural appreciation and understanding. PHOTO: PA MESRA

Ex-Georgian PM's suit to have case heard in S'pore court dismissed

K. C. Vijayan
Senior Law Correspondent

Former Georgian prime minister Bidzina Ivanishvili failed to have a lawsuit against a Swiss bank involving a US\$1.1 billion (S\$1.5 billion) trust heard in a court in Singapore instead of Geneva.

Mr Ivanishvili, 62, his wife and three children had sued Switzerland-based investment bank Credit Suisse and trustee Credit Suisse Trust in the High Court, over losses to the Mandalay Trust, of which they are the beneficiaries.

Both the bank and trustee applied last November to stop the court proceedings here and have the case heard in a Swiss court instead – which, they argued, was more appropriate.

Mr Ivanishvili – who was elected prime minister of the former Soviet republic of Georgia in October 2012 and stepped down a year later – is said to be Georgia's richest man and worth US\$4.6 billion, according to Forbes.

He settled about US\$1.1 billion in the Mandalay Trust in Singapore in March 2005, with the assets held by two investment firms, Meadowsweet Assets and Soothsayer.

In March 2005, US\$550 million was transferred to the Soothsayer account at the Singapore branch of Credit Suisse, while the remaining US\$550 million was held in the Meadowsweet accounts at the Geneva branch of the bank.

The trust assets were managed and invested by the bank, which provided investment reports detailing the performance of the accounts to the trustee. The Geneva branch was the centre of management for the portfolio.

Between September and October 2015, the bank issued margin calls totalling US\$41.01 million on accounts within the Mandalay Trust. The calls were sparked by the drop in the value of the trust fund from US\$697.68 million in December 2014 to US\$437.8 million in September 2015.

Mr Ivanishvili claims that in the process of following up on these margin calls, he discovered miscon-

duct on the part of his portfolio manager Patrice Lescaudron.

Lescaudron was convicted of embezzlement, forgery and other charges in a Geneva court last year and jailed for five years.

In a lawsuit last August, the plaintiffs sought to find the bank liable to account for losses to the Mandalay Trust, among other things.

But the defendants successfully applied for the case to be heard in a Swiss court.

Mr Ivanishvili, represented by a legal team led by Senior Counsel N. Sreenivasan and Mr S. Palaniappan, appealed to the High Court last October.

The bank was defended by Senior Counsel Harpreet Singh Nehal, Mr Jordan Tan and two others, while Senior Counsel Stanley Lai, Mr Kenneth Lim and three others acted for the trustee.

In judgment grounds issued last month, Justice Valerie Thean wrote that issues such as the governing laws of the country, the location of the witnesses, documents and evidence, the need to find a trial venue that better secures a just trial, and the overall nature of the litigation are important factors in this case.

Justice Thean said: "The claim is essentially one framed against the bank for conduct wider than the Mandalay Trust."

She added that the "site" of the events "surrounding the claims against the bank is Geneva, and ought to be tested in Geneva".

The judge found that the plaintiffs' trust case against the trustee is rooted in Singapore, while the case against the bank is rooted in Geneva, which is the central "theatre of action".

Justice Thean ruled that Geneva was the most suitable forum for the case to be heard.

Dismissing the appeal, she said: "Having regard to all the circumstances, it is fair to conclude that the trust relationship was the ancillary relationship, and the banking relationship in Geneva was the primary one."

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STORIES KEEP PLACES ALIVE

Buildings can age or be demolished, but stories are what keep places alive. By sharing my stories of growing up here, I can help to keep this Queenstown area alive.



MISS LEE HUI FANG, 35, a resident of Strathmore Avenue in Queenstown who joined the tour and told stories about growing up in the area to other tour group members.

IT'S A — THE NEW MARKET — DEAL

PHOTO: ISTOCK



PHOTO: GARDENS BY THE BAY

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Designs for prosperity

Make giving — and receiving — a joy with red packets that take creativity to the next

BY RACHEL TAN, MICHELLE BONG

Some of Singapore's well-known brands have created eye-catching hongbaos designed to mark the occasion of welcoming the joyful and easy-going Earth Pig this Lunar New Year on February 5.

The designs range from adorable pigs and vibrant shades of brilliant pink, to elemental references of earthy floral designs and patterned cheongsams. The inspirations behind them vary.

Says a spokesperson from Gardens by the Bay: "It has been our tradition to design hongbaos as gifts for visitors, partners and friends of the Gardens. The designs feature elements distinctive to the Gardens, such as flowers or the Supertrees and cooled conservatories."

Its new design features bright hues that represent the colourful plant displays and vibrant events at the iconic tourist attraction, while its Chinese New Year greeting related to flowers reflects how the Gardens brings perpetual spring to Singapore through its floral displays throughout the year.

Chinoiserie approach

Meanwhile, the design of Wisma Atria's hongbaos was conceived by marrying the ubiquitous cheongsam and the colours and motifs from the mall's festive decor "to create a seamless vision that is both timeless yet relevant". Featuring fabric-like paper with a sheen, the hongbaos evoke luxury and a blessing-in-waiting.

Explains its vice-president of marketing, Mr Jacke Chye: "This

design offers something for everybody, be it the aesthetically-pleasing colours of Prosperity Pink and Blossom Blue, the luxurious feel of the paper, the creative cheongsam design or the floral motif.

"The important thing is for the hongbao to look attractive and stand out to our shoppers — and that they would be proud of giving away. We also want the design to bring joy to its recipients. We believe this year's hongbao design will be the most popular one yet; shoppers have been giving favourable feedback when they redeem it."

Collectible designs

And if you shop at Velocity@Novena Square, you can pick up a hongbao creation inspired by layered paper art. The theme reflects how it is an art form growing in popularity, and is in line with UOL Malls & More's commitment to offer unique hongbaos every year.

Explains its senior marketing communications manager Serene Cheng: "Each UOL Mall has a distinct identity, and we believe being unique should flow through in our gifts to our shoppers. Hence, it's a tradition for us to come up with our own designs."

"Each design must be timeless, and shoppers must be inspired to collect our hongbaos and use them for occasions other than Chinese New Year.

"Most of our designs are popular, including last year's pop-out tea pot hongbao and 2017's lasercut design featuring a butterfly clasp. Shoppers were trying to purchase them, and our hongbao printer had clients who wanted to copy our designs the following year."



A perfect partnership

The 10-10-10 campaign by UOB and Grab promises great ride rewards for UOB cardmembers. Till February 28, 500 UOB cardmembers who choose UOB as their preferred Grab payment option can receive \$10 off their Grab ride daily. UOB One, YOLO and Direct Visa Debit cardmembers earn a monthly cash rebate of up to 10 per cent on all Grab transactions made with their UOB card. Not a UOB cardmember? Be the first 400 to sign up and enjoy 10 \$10-discounts on Grab rides till March 31. Cardmembers enjoy \$5 off one ride upon activation of Auto Top-Up on GrabPay with a UOB Card, while UOB Reserve cardmembers receive an automatic priority booking upgrade to Grab Platinum Status. Visit uob.com.sg/grab for details.

Symbols of prosperity

Mark the year of the Pig with a piece of jewellery by Maxi-Cash. Consider a special edition 999 pure gold collectible from the Zhu Bao Bao collection featuring an adorable Prosperity Pig character, or a unique 999 pure gold pig charm bracelet with semi-precious stones on a complimentary braided cord. Other auspicious gifts include semi-precious gem bracelets with the PiQiu (a celestial creature resembling a dragon) crafted in 999 pure gold to symbolise the attraction of wealth and fortune, and insignia rings themed fortune, luck and wealth from the 916 gold collection. Visit maxi-cash.com.sg for details.



For the good of the community

As part of its corporate social responsibility programme, Courts Singapore has launched Courts Charity Home. The year-long collaborative partnership with Care Community Services Society (CCSS) makes donations of home products to the needy while providing opportunities for Courts staff volunteers to do their part throughout the year. Ahead of the Lunar New Year, \$15,000 worth of Courts home goods such as furniture, bedding and electrical appliances were presented to low-income elderly residents in the MacPherson area. Residents also received help to spring-clean their homes and were hosted to a Chinese New Year buffet dinner.

TOP PICKS

Brighten your kitchen

Earn one stamp with every \$10 spent in a single receipt at Cold Storage. Till April 25, you can accumulate up to five stamps to purchase the Cast Iron, Enamel Cookware and Ramekin Collection by German gourmet cookware brand Berndes. Its premium quality cookware made with improved coating techniques is designed to be energy efficient, spreading heat rapidly and evenly to reduce cooking time. Redemption of the cookware is till May 2 at any Cold Storage store.



Go "low" and win

Gardenia's Low in Sugar range of Enriched White Bread is available in three sizes and comes in seven variants of whole meal and multi-grain loaves. Till March 15, mail in any Gardenia Low in Sugar product packaging with a contest form, or SMS your details to 9010-2332, and you could win exclusive prizes worth over \$36,000, including cash and gift certificates for Capella Singapore's Room & Spa.



Yummy goodness

Welcome the Lunar New Year with Mahota Kitchen's wide range of Chinese New Year treats such as the Spring Platter, Yuzu and tangerine mocktails, and Mahota Nian Gao. Orders for certain items must be placed three working days in advance, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Mahota Kitchen (Tel: 6291-1327) is located at Century Square and Kitchener Complex (Level 3).



New co-working space in downtown

The General Room at Orchard Road is a stylish, modern shared-office premise and facilities for businesses in the fashion, retail, financial and wealth management sectors. It aims to provide a collaborative base for greater interaction and innovation among those working in these sectors. Co-working configurations start from \$500 a month for a single desk. Day passes at \$50 are available too. Find out more at www.thegeneralroom.com



Auspicious treats

Feast on a whole suckling pig that is new on the nine-course Chinese New Year dinner set menu (\$698++ for 10 persons) at Ban Heng Group of Restaurants. The 50-year-old restaurant chain also serves a dim sum buffet (from \$30.80++) at its HarbourFront Centre outlet. Dine-in customers enjoy 50 per cent off the Special Yusheng Lo Hei with Abalone & Crispy Fish Skin topped with Honey Mustard Sauce (U.P. \$69.99) or the Salmon Lo Hei (U.P. \$49.99). Terms and conditions apply. Visit www.banheng.com.sg for more details.



COMING UP



Professionals in healthcare
The Straits Times, Feb 9



Business As Usual 2019
The Straits Times, Feb 5



The true value of quality healthcare
<http://tinyurl.com/y8mmr4c2>



Designing for the future
<https://tinyurl.com/y72d4cxr>

THE STRAITS TIMES
A Singapore Press Holdings
publication
News Centre
1000 Toa Payoh North,
Singapore
318994

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FORUM

deedhan's TAKE

News

Manpower Ministry report:
Singapore workers clock fewer hours over eight years

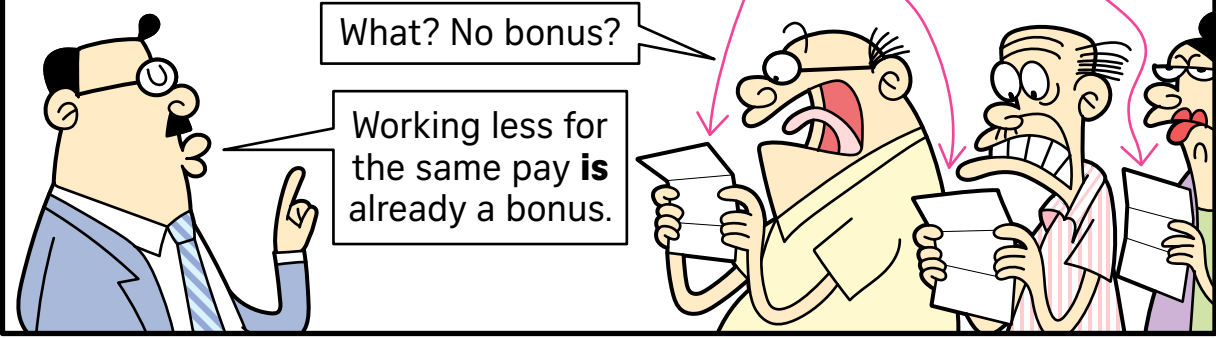


Bad news

SALARY LETTERS

What? No bonus?

Working less for the same pay is already a bonus.



WRITE IN: Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit the letters. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg.

Hard to protect passengers without airlines on board

Passenger protection matters. While experts consider European legislation protecting airline passengers against delays and cancellations to be less relevant to Singapore, it is still worth noting the challenges the European authorities face in implementing it (Budget airline? Sure, but good basic service still a must; Jan 25). Under European laws, airlines must compensate passengers up to 600 euros (\$928) for delays of four hours and more. Yet, after Swiss

International Air Lines cancelled its LX176 flight from Zurich to Singapore on Jan 6 due to a mechanical fault, the airlines denied compensation claims despite its clear legal liability, citing the extraordinary circumstances clause. Ill-informed passengers may accept this as true and abandon compensation claims. Savvy travellers, too, may face an uphill battle as airlines can simply refuse to pay up unless taken to court.

Many passengers have neither the time nor the interest in a protracted legal dispute, and thus will drop the case. As a result, the airlines often win and passengers lose. Passengers require not only information about their rights, but also accessible mechanisms by which they can secure these rights. Compliance by airlines remains an issue. Stronger enforcement is one solution. Hefty fines for violating the

US Department of Transport's three-hour tarmac rule has led to widespread compliance by airlines. Partnerships are another possible solution. There may be benefits in engaging airlines when shaping the regulatory environment. By finding a reasonable mid-point between profit-making and passenger protection, it is hoped that more airlines will voluntarily comply. **Tommy K.S. Koh**

Anti-colonial sentiment directed at idea of colonisation

Many of the commentaries and news reports thus far have focused on the positive outcomes brought on by colonisation, and I sense many of the bicentennial commemoration programmes do so too (Looking back to chart way forward; Jan 27). Naturally, descendants of migrant societies are more endeared towards historical developments that allowed their ancestors' immigration in the past. That is all good, as no one should begrudge his historical past that brought him his present prosperity. But no one should dismiss the indigenous society's sense of loss and injustice brought on by colonisation either. Whether or not that society's lot improved as a result of colonisation is moot. History is too complex. Be that as it may, the anti-colonial sentiment is not directed towards the history but the very notion of colonisation itself. This commemoration should enhance our resolve against any form of colonisation. But because we can't empathise with this sense of loss, none of the commemoration programmes and reports has so far shed light on how a geographically strategic island could be lost to people from halfway across the world. An understanding of the socio-political machinations that led to this would give us valuable lessons. Obviously, it would teach us about losing our country again. Equally important is an awareness against inadvertently "colonising" other societies in the many ways we have become powerful today. Lastly, it would also develop our empathy towards many societies whose lands are occupied against their will, even in this day and age. **Osman Sidek**

Convert Young Lions to NS team

Last year marked a major revamp of the Singapore Premier League (SPL) with six local clubs having to recruit at least six Under-23 footballers for their squad, and a minimum of three Under-23 players to feature in the starting 11 for each match. While there had been many calls for the Young Lions to be scrapped, the Football Association of Singapore (FAS) will likely continue with this project till the 2019 Sea Games at least. I believe FAS can evolve this project into a national one by converting the Young Lions team into a national service team. As the name suggests, it should be only for Singaporean players serving NS. Before 1996, the SAF Sports Association (Safsa) football team and the Singapore Police Force football team had players serving NS in the football league. With the inception of the Republic's professional football league in 1996, it seems this scheme was removed. With our shrinking population, perhaps FAS could work with SAF and the Home Team to establish a

scheme that allows full-time national servicemen to serve NS and, at the same time, play in the league for an NS team. These NSF's will need to serve at least three months of basic military training before they are allowed to play for the NS team. There should be an upper and lower limit for the number of players allowed from SAF and Home Team to prevent any abuse of the system. The objective of this scheme would be to bridge the two-year gap so that our national team will have a constant supply of local football talent. If there is a shortfall in talent in the SPL, FAS could allow up to three local national team senior players or foreign players to be in the team. The NSF's who have completed their term of service during the SPL season should be allowed to play till the end of the season too. This project could potentially increase the pool of Singaporeans who may want to play football professionally. **Ivan Goh**



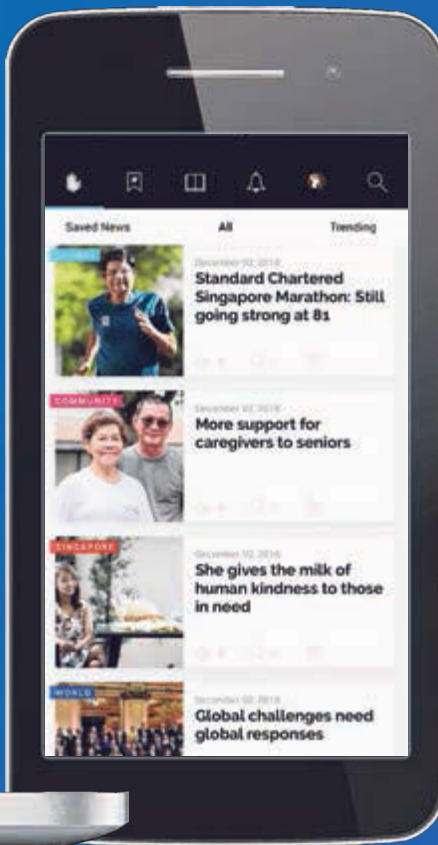
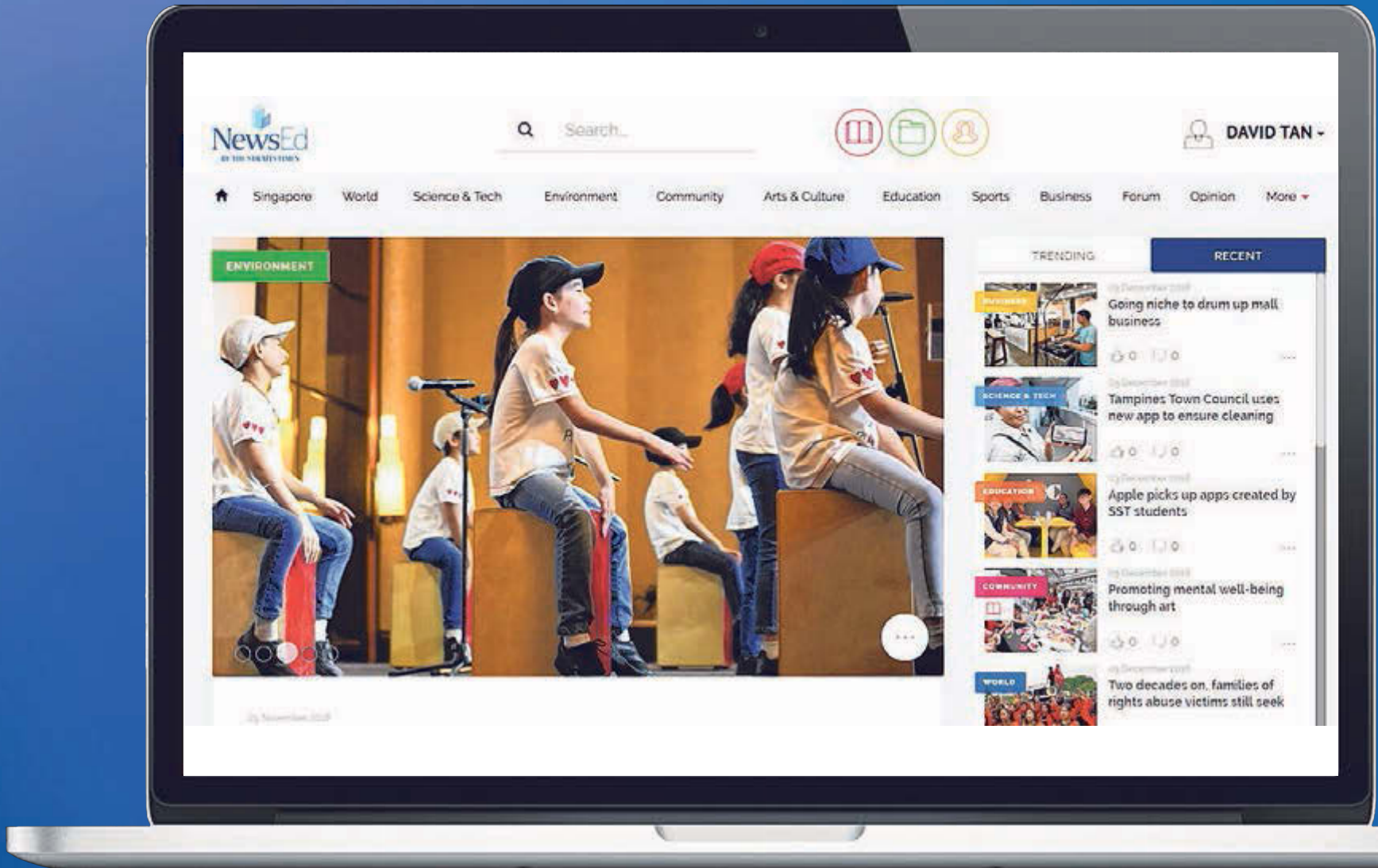
NewsEd

BY THE STRAITS TIMES

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Will electronic health record system bring more leaks?

The massive medical data leaks – the SingHealth cyber attack last year and last week’s illegal release of 14,200 people’s information on the HIV Registry – were reprehensible acts perpetuated by hackers and miscreants. They should be traced, extradited and punished to the fullest extent of the law. When the National Electronic Health Record system is implemented, the prediction is that there will be many more

breaches of patient information, many of which will be unintended and unpremeditated due to older doctors who may not be tech-savvy. Will these doctors be looked upon sympathetically and treated with lenience, or will the Singapore Medical Council be unmerciful? Senior Health Correspondent Salma Khalik said that the solution is for the Ministry of Health to build systems that make it difficult,

if not impossible, for anyone to access such information (MOH must learn from breaches to build more robust, secure system; Feb 1). If such a system existed, I would expect it to be clunky and not user-friendly, with layer upon layer of stringent checks. Furthermore, if such a system were a possibility to begin with, surely we would not be facing the problems we are dealing with today. **Yik Keng Yeong (Dr)**

Can’t get rid of HIV-related stigma

Although there are laws to protect HIV-positive local employees from wrongful dismissals, the aftermath can have far-reaching implications (MOM: HIV-positive staff protected from wrongful dismissal; Jan 31). First, how can we be assured that employers will not find fault or make life difficult for the victims so that they resign voluntarily? Second, what about the workplace stigma? How are we to be sure that it will be business as

usual in the office in terms of how the victims’ colleagues treat them? With technology, it is only a matter of time before the entire office finds out about the victims’ HIV history. It is important to understand that many of these victims may not have even told their families and close friends of their condition. It is easy to apologise and undertake remedial work, but the stigma will remain permanently.

It is natural for people to think that those who deal with sensitive matters, such as healthcare service providers, would have robust security systems to protect their confidentiality. The Ministry of Health needs to show that it understands the seriousness of data protection. With the latest breach, there is also much apprehension about the National Electronic Health Record system. **Cheng Choon Fei**

What is MOM’s position on ‘unequal’ notice periods?

In the light of the impending changes to the Employment Act to cover all employees regardless of salary, which will take effect from April, I would like to ask the Ministry of Manpower for its position on existing employment contracts signed before April, where an employee is required to

give two months’ notice to resign, but the employer only has to give one month’s notice of termination of employment (Employment Act changes give workers greater protection; Jan 20). While such an instance of “unequal” notice periods may not be the norm in employment

contracts, I am aware that they do exist in some small and medium-sized enterprises for employees who are above the \$4,500 salary threshold and who, therefore, do not fall within the ambit of the Employment Act prior to the April revisions. **Sean Patrick**

WRITE IN: Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer’s full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit the letters. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg. Readers can also respond to letters via Facebook and Twitter.

VoicesOfYouth

The importance of united families

As Chinese New Year approaches, it is important that families spend time with one another. However, the idea of coming together with extended families can be challenging to those who have drifted from their families. One can start by chatting about simple things, from complimenting family members on their New Year outfits to talking about hobbies, before furthering the conversation to deeper topics, like one’s personal goals for the year. Ultimately, a change in our relationships starts from within the four walls in which we live. Before worrying about the happenings of the outside world, we should take a look at the people at home and invest in their lives. A united family translates to united communities and, in turn, a more united nation. **Nicole Soh Li Ying**, 17 Polytechnic Year 1 student

smoke-free Singapore should be a policy combating the underage smoking epidemic, beyond simplistic education campaigns, to more effectively prevent the formation of a new generation of smokers. The Tobacco Free Generation movement does exactly this, by proposing a birth year beyond which individuals are unable to smoke for the entirety of their lives. Birth year-based policymaking sets more ideal standards on the younger generation while still respecting older policies implemented on preceding generations. **Ullekha Murali**, 18 A-level graduate

Treasure value of teamwork

One of the skills that students lack nowadays is the spirit of teamwork, and a big part of this is due to the “kiasu” mentality ingrained in Singaporeans. In a sense, this has cultivated a very unhealthy educational system where students view each other as competitors and try their best to perform better than their classmates, often forgetting that, as a class, they should all learn together. This happens in the form of not sharing notes, ignoring others when they send a message on WhatsApp groups saying that they need help and much more. There is a need for students to treasure the value of teamwork and for schools to cultivate this in students at a young age. **Vanness Ang Wah Yee**, 14 Secondary 2 student

CALLING YOUNG READERS: If you are a student or aged 21 years or below, and want to air your opinion on any report or letter in The Straits Times, e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg, with the subject header “Voices of Youth”. Do include your age, school level and contact details, and the headline of the report/letter you refer to. Please keep to a length of 250 words.

Singaporeans should cultivate long-term thinking

It is important for Singapore to progress as a compact nation, and for Singaporeans to cultivate long-term thinking (Think long term, stay united to tackle global headwinds, says Heng; Jan 26). Many hands make light work, which is especially true for Singapore. When society fragments, communication becomes difficult, which in turn makes it harder for the Government to get everyone’s views. Staying united is crucial as it facilitates faster decision-making, saving time and energy. Short-termism is also a concern, as following it results in additional problems in the long run. Thinking and planning for the long term allows the Government to channel resources more efficiently and make more of a difference in the lives of Singaporeans. Singapore would not be what it is today without long-term planning. The best way to cultivate long-term thinking is to start with the young. Schools and parents should instil the importance of long-term thinking in children by, for example, showing them that if they do not spend unnecessarily on snacks, they can save money to buy a gift for their loved ones. **Ethel Lee (Ms)**

FORUM ONLINE

1. **TAN KAR QUAN:** Important to practise cyber hygiene.
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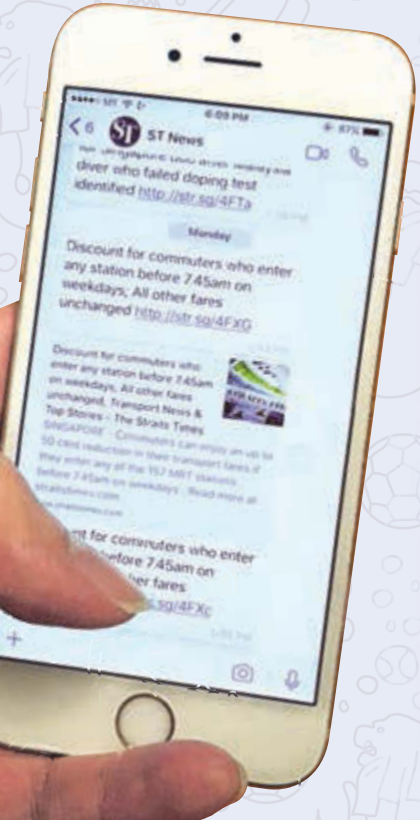
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ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG

In line for a new home

Applicants queueing at the Housing and Development Board office in Upper Pickering Street to apply for HDB flats on Sept 3, 1968.

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West Coast Park (71 West Coast Highway)
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Trade Hub 21 (28 Boon Lay Way #01-173/174)
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AMSA DIVESTMENT EXPECTED TO RESULT IN GAIN FOR SIA ENGINEERING IN YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2019 **C2**

Expat tenants gripe online about rental deposit woes

They say landlords hold their money ransom, make unreasonable cleaning, repair demands

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

Polish the marble floor, buff the wooden staircase and sand the kitchen tops before returning the keys, the landlord demanded.

Oh, and if you decline or seek any legal recourse, you risk losing your security deposit.

That was the ultimatum put to software sales professional Megha Bhattacharya, 26, when she ended her lease of a condominium penthouse last year, and she is not alone. Many tenants have been recounting unpleasant experiences with landlords on online forums of late but they find they have little room to manoeuvre because of the security deposit.

Security deposits, usually equivalent to a month's rent, are paid at the start of the tenancy and held by the landlord until the tenant leaves.

The deposits are meant to be a fall-back for landlords when their tenants fail to pay the rent. If there are

no disputes, the deposit should be returned in full once the lease is up.

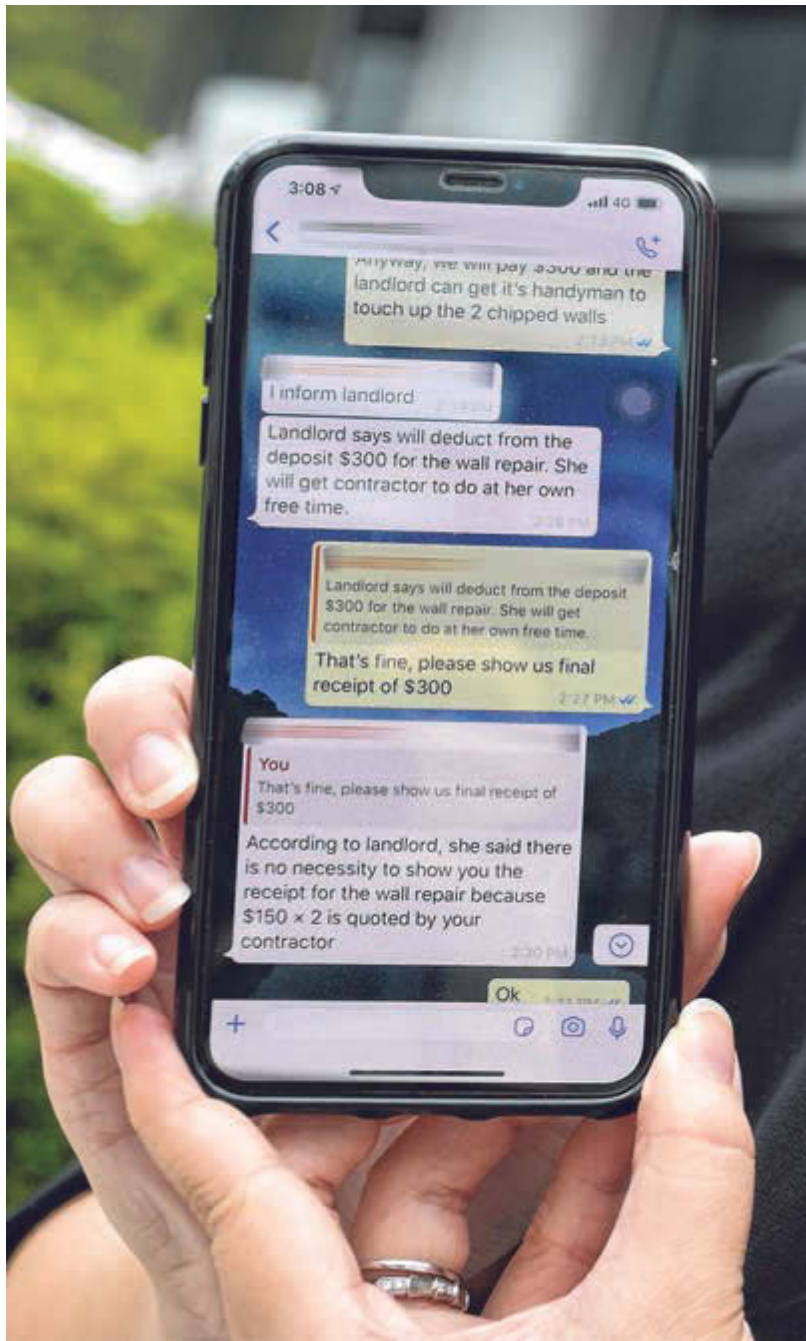
But in some cases, tenants stop paying rent when they encounter disagreements over repair and reinstatement works, as they suspect their deposit will be lost anyway.

Some countries insist that the deposit be held in an escrow account while others have adopted deposit protection schemes. But there are no such practices here.

Any disagreements, including the forfeiture of deposits, are private matters between the tenant and the flat owner, said the Housing Board on its website.

Ms Megha forked out around \$4,000 for the polishing work instead of losing her deposit of about \$15,000. The expatriate from India recalled how her landlord attributed the request to "unreasonable wear and tear" on Ms Megha's part.

"(These were) absolutely ridiculous claims... I knew that a deep moving-out cleaning is a fair request and usually part of the agree-



Madam Felicia Hu (above right), a Singaporean with an expat husband, showing a WhatsApp discussion with her agent on repair costs. ST PHOTOS: KUA CHEE SIONG

ment. But this request was completely out of line," she said.

Such stories are common on forums frequented by expatriates,

with around 10 tenants posting their stories in the past three months. These have soured Singapore's reputation as a welcoming



COULDN'T SAY NO

Ultimately, we couldn't say no, because the landlord was holding our security deposit as ransom, and the money was to go to our next home. The repairs were completely at the landlord's discretion.

”

MADAM FELICIA HU, a Singaporean with an expat husband, on her former landlord holding the security deposit as ransom.

LANDLORD OUT OF LINE

(These were) absolutely ridiculous claims... I knew that a deep moving-out cleaning is a fair request and usually part of the agreement. But this request was completely out of line.

”

MS MEGHA BHATTACHARYA, on what she said were ridiculous cleaning demands made by her former landlord, such as polishing the marble floor.

Madam Hu and her expatriate husband paid more than \$1,000 to replace and repair old home appliances at her former landlord's request, fearing the loss of a \$3,400 deposit. "Ultimately, we couldn't say no, because the landlord was holding our security deposit as ransom, and the money was to go to our next home," she said.

Ms Megha and Madam Hu did not turn to the Small Claims Tribunal, which hears cases on tenancy disputes for claims of up to \$20,000.

Property lawyers said there are reasons why security deposits are held by landlords, who are entitled to forfeit the deposit based on the terms of the tenancy agreement.

Failure to pay rent and constant late payments are the most frequent types of tenancy conflicts encountered by Ms Lilian Lim, head of conveyancing and managing partner of Circular Law Chambers LLP.

The risks for landlords are high. New tenants, Ms Lim said, typically call for refurbishment works.

Landlords also risk having an empty property, and they would then need to pay the monthly instalments, maintenance contribution and property tax on their own.

There are also the horror stories, where tenants leave the property in a bad condition, beyond what the security deposit could cover. "One of our clients had a shock on discovering that the tenants had thrashed the property and left the country with arrears in rent, and the client was unable to recover his damages and losses as he was unable to locate the tenants," said Ms Lim.

If tenants have not breached the lease agreement and the landlord still withholds the deposit, they can start legal proceedings, said Mr Ng Lip Kai, an associate at law firm Joseph Tan Jude Benny LLP.

"In general, it would be prudent for tenants to be proactive and raise the issue of handover prior to the end of the lease," he said.

ngjunsen@sph.com.sg

How security deposits are handled elsewhere

In Britain, where a fifth of the population rent privately, the government mandated in 2004 that security deposits be held in escrow through an authorised tenancy deposit protection scheme.

The money would be protected until any dispute that arose was resolved, said property lawyer Lilian Lim. Both sides must agree before any withdrawal can be made.

"The scheme is designed to protect both tenants and landlords alike. It pressurises both parties to agree or compromise," said Ms Lim. But she felt that a similar law would not work here as it would not be cost effective given the administrative fees involved, regardless of any dispute.

Resolving disputes through the Small Claims Tribunal is the more cost-effective way, she said.

But that has not stopped start-up Sing-Guarantee from trying to change the status quo.

With both tenants and landlords in agreement, Sing-Guarantee can place an amount equivalent to a security deposit in an escrow account on the tenant's behalf.

A \$3,500 security deposit would cost a tenant about \$500 a year in fees, according to the company.

Sing-Guarantee business development director Gordonn Chiu said the deposit, backed by the firm, would be placed in a trust



managed by a Monetary Authority of Singapore-regulated third party escrow agent, in a manner similar to other security deposit agents in Europe. In Switzerland, almost

half of all rental leases are protected by third-party guaranties instead of a paid-up deposit, according to the company.

Property lawyer Ng Lip Kai said

prudent landlords may still insist on holding onto security deposits as it is their protection from tenants who breach their agreement, leaving any damage to the prop-

erty or unpaid rent, and move overseas, where it is difficult to pursue them legally.

"By contrast, for cases where the landlord threatens to withhold the

In Britain

A fifth of the population rent privately, so the UK government mandated in 2004 that security deposits be held in escrow through an authorised tenancy deposit protection scheme.

In Switzerland

Almost half of all rental leases are protected by third-party guaranties.

Sing-Guarantee director Ronald Choo (far left) and business development director Gordonn Chiu believe putting security deposits into escrow could help de-escalate potential conflict between landlords and tenants.

ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

security deposit without good reason, the landlord will likely be local entities," said Mr Ng.

Ng Jun Sen

‘Bear market bounce’ expected amid recession risks

While equity markets have entered bear territory in recent days, investors can expect a sizeable "bear market bounce" in the first half of 2019, JP Morgan Asset Management (JPMAM) said.

Its Singapore-based global market strategist Jasslyn Yeo noted that several potential positive catalysts support the case for a significant bounce, including the recent change to a more dovish view by the United States Federal Reserve's policymaking committee.

"The first quarter has typically

been a seasonally weak quarter for US growth. Coupled with the US government shutdown, we expect the Fed to pause in March and for this pause to bring about much relief for risk assets," said Dr Yeo.

She added that investor sentiment could improve on the back of a positive fourth-quarter earnings season, further China policy stimulus and a potential US-China trade deal before the March 2 deadline.

Dr Yeo also judged this bear market to be a more cyclical one associated with the normal downturn of

business cycles, given the absence of major structural imbalances. Cyclical bears tend to see shallower corrections and quicker recoveries than structural bears.

However, the outlook pointed to further recession risks and longer recoveries ahead, given the limited ability of central banks to stimulate the economy. Going by slowing real gross domestic product figures, global growth was moderating from above-trend to trend rates, and markets were "firmly in late cycle 2.0", Dr Yeo said in the firm's

quarterly outlook on Thursday.

Global central banks were also gradually withdrawing liquidity support that bolstered market returns and asset prices in the last several years.

"Global growth is slowing and global liquidity is tightening, but the US Federal Reserve is unlikely to stop hiking rates with no immediate threat of a recession," JPMAM noted.

"The European Central Bank could find it hard to raise rates, while the Bank of Japan is likely to

remain status quo. Conversely, the Chinese government could further ease policy to stabilise growth, but we don't expect to see any big-bang stimulus."

She recommended that longer-term investors use the bear market bounce to de-risk their portfolios, and consider more bond exposure to diversify and mitigate volatility.

Demand for safe-haven US Treasuries would likely increase as the Fed approached the peak of its rate-hike cycle and recession risks also increased. US corporate bonds, how-

ever, were vulnerable, with large downside risks and typically poor liquidity with the recession risks.

JPMAM remained cautious on equities beyond the prospect for a bounce, preferring those with more defensive, income-generating characteristics.

"Valuations may be looking more reasonable following a difficult 2018, but it's hard to see sustainable re-rating with tightening global liquidity and negative earnings revisions," Dr Yeo said. "Earnings per share growth is likely to fall further as the cycle slows down."

Dr Yeo advised caution on emerging markets and Asia ex-Japan equities, as the US dollar was likely to appreciate with rising recession risk.

MarketsInsights

Quiet week expected but it still pays to be alert

Market trading across Asia likely thin due to holidays but geopolitical risks still a concern

Lynette Tan

It may be a quiet week with the Singapore market closed tomorrow and Wednesday for Chinese New Year celebrations, but do not be too quick to ignore possible market volatility.

With trade tensions and other

geopolitical risks continuing to weigh on sentiment, volatility should still be expected regardless of the light economic calendar, said Mr Lukman Otunuga, research analyst at FXTM.

He will also pay attention to the Singapore manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) report today for indications of whether

trade tensions have impacted the nation's manufacturing sector.

The January Nikkei PMI and official foreign reserves data on Thursday should also offer fresh insight into the Singapore economy, he said. "We see the Singapore dollar extending gains against a broadly weaker US dollar if domestic data exceeds expectations," he added.

China is closed for the Chinese New Year. Hong Kong and Singapore markets will be shut over the next two days. Thus, market trading across Asia will most likely be thin.

The week is also scant on economic data from the region, with China releasing its foreign reserve holdings only in the week. Elsewhere, the re-opening of the US government is expected to provide delayed reports on November's trade data – pertinent in relation to the US-China trade issue.

But busier central banks may define trading in Asia this week, with four major central banks in action.

There is a substantial monetary policy decision calendar from regional central banks this week,

starting with the Reserve Bank of Australia and Bank of Thailand tomorrow, as well as Reserve Bank of India and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas on Wednesday. Their moves should be watched following the US Federal Reserve's shift to put a hold on interest rate hikes.

The US earnings season also remains in full swing. Besides the US Federal Reserve, a key driving force last week had also been earnings, with a series of earnings releases by Caterpillar, Apple, Facebook and Amazon moving markets.

Names on this week's calendar include Google's parent company Alphabet and Twitter Inc. Market watchers will continue to look for signs of corporate resilience and direction.

On the local front, SIA Engineering is scheduled to release earnings on Friday, after the market's close. Last December, the firm divested its entire stake in its subsidiary, Aircraft Maintenance Services Australia (Amsa), for A\$4.5 million (\$4.5 million) in cash to aircraft leasing company Heston Services Limited. The divestment of Amsa is expected to result in a gain of about \$5.5 million for SIA Engineering for the financial year ending March 31, 2019.

Earlier last month, UOB Kay Hian upgraded SIA Engineering to "buy" with a target price of \$2.70, saying the stock should outperform this year after seeing an excessive 28 per cent slump last year.

The counter was a key under-performer last year amid concerns over a deteriorating top-line.

While challenges remain, UOB said the company is addressing this by growing its line maintenance business. SIA Engineering shares closed 0.81 per cent higher on Friday, at \$2.50.

Other stocks to watch include property developer SingHaiyi's, after it posted higher third-quarter net profits last Friday night. The counter was last traded at 9.4 cents a share.

Also, Sevak Limited's controlling shareholder announced intentions to make a partial offer for shares of the firm.

It came just after the Singapore Exchange Regulation urged investors and potential investors to exercise caution when trading in the shares of the company.

The counter closed down 7.43 per cent to \$3.49 on Friday.

tanlyn@sph.com.sg

OnTheMove

RHB

RHB Banking Group has appointed a new country head for Singapore.

The Malaysian bank hired veteran banker Danny Quah for the post and also to serve as chief executive of RHB Bank Singapore.

Mr Quah was last the regional CEO for Chong Sing Fintech Group, a listed company in Hong Kong, where he was tasked to set up a regional headquarters in Singapore to invest in fintech companies across South-east Asia.

He replaces Mr Mike Chan Cheong Yuen, who is leaving the group to pursue other opportunities.

Mr Quah has had nearly 25 years of experience in banking and finance, having previously worked at Standard Chartered Bank, Fullerton Financial Holdings and Canada Bank.

Tokio Marine Life Insurance Singapore

Mr Christopher Teo Sze Teck has been named as the new chief executive of Tokio Marine Life Insurance Singapore.

Mr Teo, who has nearly 27 years of experience in the insurance and banking industry, has held leadership positions such as the CEO and general director of Vietinbank-Aviva Life Insurance Company, Vietnam.

His recent roles include being the senior vice-president of business development with NTUC Income Insurance Co-Operative, and the chief executive and a board member of Professional Investment Advisory Services.

He takes over from Mr James Tan, who stepped down in December.

Frasers Hospitality Asset

Frasers Hospitality Asset management has appointed Mr Gan Chee Teik as its chief financial officer.

He will be responsible for the financial and capital management of Frasers Hospitality Trust, Frasers Hospitality Real Estate Investment Trust, and Frasers Hospitality Business Trust.

He joined Frasers from OUE Hospitality Reit Management and OUE Hospitality Trust Management, where he was previously chief financial officer.

Commentary

Trends in the environmental, social, governance investing landscape

Rakhi Kumar and Ali Weiner

The field of environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing has undergone rapid changes in recent years. We look at five trends and what they mean for investors.

1 INVESTORS MOVING FROM PURELY EXCLUSIONARY TO INTEGRATED ESG STRATEGIES

For decades, asset owners have used exclusionary strategies to keep securities that did not align with their values out of their portfolios. Increasingly, we see investors embrace ESG investing due to the "value" it offers to long-term investors.

Investors are looking at ESG factors not as separate

considerations, but also as complementary data to be integrated alongside traditional financial information. Three reasons are behind this trend:

- The proliferation of ESG data providers in the 2000s means that by now, more historical ESG data is available for research, which increasingly shows that material ESG information can be a value driver to be considered in the investment processes;
- The development of market infrastructure such as the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board Framework has encouraged companies to report their ESG activities in ways that are material to investors;
- Regulatory action, particularly in Europe, will mandate investors to consider ESG information in their investment process.

It is important to note that exclusions and integration are not

mutually exclusive approaches to ESG investing, and exclusionary screens are often an overlay in an integrated approach.

This allows investors to build ESG portfolios that closely align with their objectives.

2 INVESTMENT STRATEGIES WILL BE INCREASINGLY POWERED BY MULTIPLE SOURCES OF ESG DATA

Historically, investors relied on a single source of ESG data to inform their investment processes. This typically comes from third-party providers.

Most providers employ their own proprietary methodologies, and recent research by State Street Global Advisors shows there is often low correlation between how different data providers score the same universe of companies. Therefore, choosing a data provider also means choosing that provider's ESG investment philosophy.

In response, we increasingly see investors embracing investment solutions based on multiple providers. For example, some investment consultants are starting to favour investment strategies informed by multiple sources of ESG data. We expect this to become increasingly common across the industry in the coming years.

3 GROWING DEMAND TO UNDERSTAND ESG PERFORMANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO AGAINST DESIRED OBJECTIVES

WILL DRIVE THE NEED FOR ENHANCED REPORTING

With investors looking at ESG as a value-based dimension of their portfolio, they increasingly want to understand ESG performance the way they would any other traditional financial measure. This, along with demand from beneficiaries and stakeholders for greater insight into the ESG profile of their investments, is leading to greater interest in robust ESG reporting along dimensions such as carbon intensity, controversy exposure and overall ESG profile.

4 CLIMATE SOLUTIONS WILL EVOLVE TO INCLUDE ADAPTATION ALONGSIDE MITIGATION

For asset owners who seek to invest in a way that is aware of and responsive to climate change, solutions in the marketplace have traditionally focused on mitigation: reducing the effects of climate change on a portfolio by, for example, reducing exposure to greenhouse gases and increasing exposure to "green" energy firms.

As extreme weather events become more frequent and the economic impacts of climate change more widely understood and accepted, investors will require companies to disclose how they are adapting their business strategies to accommodate the impacts of climate change.

This is particularly true of those investors who are committed to the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures.

Consequently, management and boards will need to fully incorporate climate change into their long-term strategies. Investors on the leading edge of climate investing will seek to enhance their climate investment from pure mitigation strategies to those that align to a mitigation and adaptation investment thesis.

5 MAINSTREAMING OF ESG WILL DRIVE INVESTMENTS IN TALENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

ESG investing no longer lives in a silo as it once did. Increasingly, ESG is being integrated into the routine investment processes of asset managers. Because of this, the demand for experienced ESG professionals is acute.

ESG investing is a specialised field that requires interdisciplinary knowledge and a variety of capabilities – deep investment expertise, strong policy and strategic analysis and the ability to communicate to stakeholders who often use differing ESG-related terminology.

To build robust ESG capabilities, firms will require talent that can do each of these things well. It also will require training of current investment and sales teams, as well as investments in data, analytics and reporting infrastructure to allow for full integration.

• Ms Rakhi Kumar is head of ESG investing and asset stewardship, and Mr Ali Weiner is ESG investment strategist, from State Street Global Advisors.

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Commodity Euro				
R1C	28.01.19	76.84		EUR
Commodity Euro				
11C	28.01.19	8219.00		EUR
Commodity USD				
R1C-B	28.01.19	3.97		USD
Commodity USD				
R1C-C	28.01.19	3.37		SGD
Commodity USD				
11C	28.01.19	10293.54		USD
Xtrackers II				
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1C	29/01/2019	235.64		AUD
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1C	29/01/2019	275.35		USD
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1D	29/01/2019	212.90		USD
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VOLUNTARY UNCONDITIONAL CASH OFFER

by



PRIMEPARTNERS CORPORATE FINANCE PTE. LTD.

(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)
(Company Registration No.: 200207389D)

for and on behalf of

RSP TOPCO PTE. LTD.

(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)
(Company Registration No.: 201838939E)

to acquire all the issued and paid-up ordinary shares in the capital of

RSP HOLDINGS LIMITED

(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)
(Company Registration No.: 201616770M)

VOLUNTARY UNCONDITIONAL CASH OFFER ANNOUNCEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Offer. PrimePartners Corporate Finance Pte. Ltd. ("PPCF") refers to the announcement dated 29 January 2019 (the "**Pre-Conditional Offer Announcement**") pursuant to which it has announced for and on behalf of RSP TopCo Pte. Ltd. (the "**Offeror**") that, subject to and contingent upon the satisfaction of the Pre-Conditions (as defined in paragraph 2.1 of the Pre-Conditional Offer Announcement), the Offeror intends to make a voluntary general offer (the "**Offer**") for all the issued and paid-up ordinary shares (the "**Shares**" or the "**Offer Shares**") in the capital of RSP Holdings Limited (the "**Company**").

A copy of the Pre-Conditional Offer Announcement is available on the website of the Singapore Exchange Securities Trading Limited (the "**SGX-ST**") at www.sgx.com.

2. THE PRE-CONDITIONS

As at the date of this Announcement (the "**Offer Announcement Date**"), all of the Pre-Conditions have been satisfied and accordingly, PPCF wishes to announce for and on behalf of the Offeror, the Offeror's firm intention to make the Offer.

3. THE OFFER

Principal Terms of the Offer. The Offeror will make the Offer for all the Offer Shares on the following bases:

- (a) **Offer Price.** S\$0.006006 in cash (the "**Offer Price**") for each Offer Share.

The Offer will be unconditional in all respects.

Payment of the aggregate Offer Price to each Shareholder in respect of his acceptance of the Offer will be rounded down to the nearest cent.

- (b) **Offer Shares.** The Offer will be extended to all the Shares in accordance with Section 139 of the Securities and Futures Act (Chapter 289 of Singapore) (the "**SFA**") and Rule 15 of the Singapore Code on Take-overs and Mergers (the "**Code**") and subject to the terms and conditions of the Offer to be set out in the formal offer document (the "**Offer Document**") to be posted to the Shareholders of the Company (the "**Shareholders**"). Pursuant to the completion of the proposed distribution in specie of the Real Estate Business (as defined below) to shareholders of Thomson Medical Group Limited ("**TMG**") by way of capital reduction (the "**Proposed Distribution**"), the issued and paid-up share capital of the Company is 26,063,895,035 Shares. For the avoidance of doubt, the Offer will be extended to all such Shares. Accordingly, the Offer Price values the Company at S\$156.5 million.

- (c) **No Encumbrances.** The Offer Shares are to be acquired:

- (i) fully paid;
- (ii) free from any claim, charge, easement, pledge, mortgage, encumbrance, lien, option, equity, power of sale, declaration of trust, hypothecation, retention of title, security, trust arrangement, right of pre-emption, right of first refusal, moratorium or other third party right or security interest of any kind or an agreement, arrangement or obligation to create any of the foregoing; and
- (iii) together with all rights, benefits and entitlements attached thereto as at the date of completion of the Proposed Distribution, being 31 January 2019 (the "**Completion Date**"), and thereafter attaching thereto, including but not limited to the right to receive and retain all dividends, rights, other distributions (if any) declared, paid or made by the Company in respect of the Offer Shares (collectively, "**Distributions**") (if any) which falls on or after the Completion Date.

In the event of any such Distributions being declared, paid or made on or after the Completion Date by the Company, the Offeror reserves the right to reduce the Offer Price payable to a Shareholder who validly accepts or has validly accepted the Offer by the amount of such Distributions.

- (d) **Further details.** Further details on the Offer and the terms and conditions upon which the Offer will be made will be set out in the Offer Document.

4. INFORMATION ON THE OFFEROR AND THE COMPANY

4.1 The Offeror.

- (a) The Offeror is a company incorporated in Singapore on 16 November 2018 and its sole shareholder is Mr Lim Eng Hock. Its principal activities are those of an investment holding company. The Offeror has not carried on any business since its incorporation, except for matters in connection with making the Offer.
- (b) As at the Pre-Conditional Offer Announcement Date:
- (i) the issued share capital of the Offeror is S\$100,000 comprising 100,000 issued and paid-up ordinary shares. All the issued shares are held by Mr Lim Eng Hock; and
- (ii) the directors of the Offeror are Mr Lim Eng Hock and Ms Lim Hong Lian.

4.2 The Company.

Based on publicly available information, the Company:

- (a) is a multidisciplinary real estate company with businesses in design and engineering and hospitality (the "**Real Estate Business**");
- (b) is headquartered in Singapore with offices in China, India, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam and the United Kingdom (the "**Group**"); and
- (c) has (i) ceased to be a wholly-owned subsidiary of TMG following the completion of the Proposed Distribution and (ii) is now a public Singapore company whose shares are not quoted on the Official List of the SGX-ST, any securities exchange or any regulated markets.

5. RATIONALE FOR THE ACQUISITION AND OFFEROR'S INTENTIONS FOR THE COMPANY

- 5.1 **Rationale.** As stated in TMG's circular to its shareholders dated 28 February 2018, following the completion of a very substantial acquisition of Thomson Medical Pte. Ltd. and TMC Life Sciences Berhad, TMG's focus is to develop and grow its healthcare business and that it will divest its Real Estate Business.

Based on publicly available information on TMG on the SGX-ST, TMG had issued a circular (the "**Circular**") dated 12 November 2018 in relation to the (i) Proposed Distribution; and (ii) proposed further capital reduction to write off accumulated losses (the "**Proposed Further Capital Reduction**"). The Proposed Distribution and the Proposed Further Capital Reduction were approved by shareholders of TMG at the extraordinary general meeting of TMG held on 4 December 2018. The reduction in capital under the Proposed Distribution and the Proposed Further Capital Reduction were subsequently approved by the High Court of the Republic of Singapore on 27 December 2018, and the completion of the Proposed Distribution took place on the Completion Date.

As stated in the Circular, following the completion of the Proposed Distribution and the Proposed Further Capital Reduction, the Company will be a public Singapore company whose shares are not quoted on the Official List of the SGX-ST, any securities exchange or any regulated markets. In order to provide flexibility for Shareholders who do not wish to hold shares in an unlisted company and pursuant to the requirement from the SGX-ST, a fair and reasonable exit alternative in the form of cash is to be provided to the Shareholders so that they may choose to receive cash in consideration for their Shares following the Proposed Distribution by way of capital reduction (the "**Cash Alternative**").

Pursuant to the satisfaction of the Pre-Conditions, the Offeror is now making the Offer to the Shareholders as a Cash Alternative to the Shareholders.

- 5.2 **Offeror's Intentions in relation to the Company.** The Offeror currently has no intention to introduce any major changes to the existing business of the Company, the employment of the employees of the Group, or to re-deploy any of the fixed assets of the Company, other than in the ordinary course of business.

Nonetheless, the Offeror retains the flexibility at any time to consider any options or opportunities which may present themselves and which it regards to be in the interests of the Offeror.

Following the close of the Offer, the Offeror will undertake a comprehensive review of the businesses and fixed assets of the Group, which will help the Offeror determine the optimal business strategy for the Company.

6. IRREVOCABLE UNDERTAKINGS

- 6.1 **Irrevocable Undertakings.** As at the Offer Announcement Date, Mr Lim Eng Hock owns (directly and indirectly) 23,182,771,427 Shares representing approximately 88.95% of the issued and paid-up share capital of the Company. The holdings of Shares of the LEH Concert Party Group (as defined in Appendix I) in the Company as at the Offer Announcement Date, is set out in Appendix I. Each member of the LEH Concert Party Group has irrevocably undertaken to the Offeror (such undertakings, the "**Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings**") as follows:

- (a) to accept the Offer in respect of all their issued Shares held as at the date of the Offer and all issued Shares which they may acquire on or after the date of their respective Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings whether by way of purchase or otherwise;
- (b) to waive their right under Rule 30 of the Code to receive any cash settlement or payment for their acceptance of the Offer in consideration of the Loan Arrangement (as defined below); and
- (c) not, whether directly or indirectly, through their nominees or otherwise, to acquire or enter into any arrangement or contract to acquire any Share or interest in Shares from the date of their respective Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings up to the date of the completion of the Offer, at a price higher than the Offer Price.

According to the terms of the Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings, the Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings shall lapse if:

- (i) the Pre-Conditions have not been satisfied on or before 5.00 pm on 31 March 2019 or such other date as the Offeror and TMG may determine in consultation with the SIC;
- (ii) the Offer is not made (by the posting of the Offer Document) by the time permitted under the Code; or
- (iii) for whatever reason, other than as a result of a breach by the relevant member of the LEH Concert Party Group of any of its obligations set forth in the Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings, the Offer is withdrawn, lapses or closes.

- 6.2 **Loan Arrangement.** In connection with the Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings provided by the LEH Concert Party Group members, they will, without prejudice to the fact that the Offer is a cash-only offer, instead of receiving the cash consideration which would be payable pursuant to the Offer, treat such amounts payable to them as interest-free loans by them to the Offeror (the "**Loan Arrangement**").

- 6.3 **SIC Confirmation.** SIC has confirmed that the Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings and the Loan Arrangement do not constitute special deals for the purposes of the Code. In addition, SIC has ruled that in view of the Loan Arrangement, the confirmation of financial resources required by the Offeror to implement the Offer would be limited to that required to satisfy acceptances from the Shareholders (after the Proposed Distribution) other than members of the LEH Concert Party Group.

7. CONFIRMATION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Citi Private Bank, Citibank N.A. (Singapore Branch) has confirmed that sufficient financial resources are available to the Offeror to satisfy in full all acceptances in respect of the Offer from Shareholders other than members of the LEH Concert Party Group.

8. COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

- 8.1 **Compulsory Acquisition.** Pursuant to Section 215(1) of the Companies Act (Chapter 50 of Singapore) (the "**Companies Act**"), if the Offeror acquires not less than 90% of the Shares (other than those already held by the Offeror, its related corporations or their respective nominees as at the date of the Offer), the Offeror will be entitled to exercise the right to compulsorily acquire all the Shares of Shareholders who have not accepted the Offer (the "**Dissenting Shareholders**") at the Offer Price.

- 8.2 **Offeror's Intentions.** As stated in the Pre-Conditional Offer Announcement, the Offeror intends to make the Company its wholly-owned subsidiary. Accordingly, the Offeror, when entitled, intends to exercise its right of compulsory acquisition.

- 8.3 Dissenting Shareholders have the right under and subject to Section 215(3) of the Companies Act, to require the Offeror to acquire their Shares at the Offer Price in the event that the Offeror, its related corporations or their respective nominees acquire, pursuant to the Offer, such number of Shares which, together with the Shares held by it, its related corporations or their respective nominees, comprise 90% or more of the total number of issued Shares. **Dissenting Shareholders who wish to exercise such right, if applicable, are advised to seek their own independent legal and financial advice.**

9. DISCLOSURES OF SHAREHOLDINGS AND DEALINGS

- 9.1 **Holdings of Company Securities.** As at the Offer Announcement Date, the Offeror does not own any Shares.

- 9.2 **No Other Holdings and Dealings.** Save as set out in Appendix I and based on the latest information available to the Offeror, none of (i) the Offeror; or (ii) any party acting in concert with the Offeror:

- (a) owns, controls or has agreed (other than pursuant to the Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings) to acquire any (i) Shares; (ii) securities which carry voting rights in the Company; or (iii) convertible securities, warrants, options or derivatives in respect of the Shares or securities which carry voting rights in the Company (collectively, the "**Company Securities**"); or

- (b) has dealt for value in any Company Securities during the three (3)-month period immediately preceding the Pre-Conditional Offer Announcement Date.

- 9.3 **No Undertakings.** Save for the Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings, as at the Offer Announcement Date and based on the latest information available to the Offeror, none of (i) the Offeror or (ii) any party acting in concert with the Offeror has received any irrevocable undertaking from any other party to accept or reject the Offer.

- 9.4 **No Material Arrangements.** As at the Offer Announcement Date and based on the latest information available to the Offeror, none of (i) the Offeror or (ii) any party acting in concert with the Offeror has entered into any arrangement (whether by way of option, indemnity or otherwise) in relation to shares of the Offeror or the Company which might be material to the Offer, save for the Irrevocable No Payment Undertakings.

- 9.5 **Other Arrangements.** As at the Offer Announcement Date and based on the latest information available to the Offeror, none of (i) the Offeror or (ii) any party acting in concert with the Offeror has:

- (a) granted any security interest relating to the Company Securities to another person, whether through a charge, pledge or otherwise;

- (b) borrowed any Company Securities from another person (excluding borrowed Company Securities which have been on-lent or sold); or

- (c) lent any Company Securities to another person.

- 9.6 **Derivatives.** All references to "**derivative**" shall mean any financial product whose value in whole or in part is determined, directly or indirectly, by reference to the price of an underlying security or securities which causes the holder to have a long economic exposure to the underlying securities.

- 9.7 **Disclosure of Dealings.** In accordance with the Code, the associates (as defined under the Code, and which includes all substantial shareholders) of the Company and the Offeror are hereby reminded to disclose their dealings in any securities of the Company and the Offeror under Rule 12 of the Code.

10. THE OFFER DOCUMENT

Despatch of the Offer Document. Further information on the Offer will be set out in the Offer Document, which will contain the terms and conditions of the Offer and will enclose the appropriate form of acceptance.

11. OVERSEAS SHAREHOLDERS

This Announcement does not constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to subscribe for or buy any security, nor is it a solicitation of any vote or approval in any jurisdiction, nor shall there be any sale, issuance or transfer of the securities referred to in this Announcement in any jurisdiction in contravention of applicable law. The Offer will be made solely by the Offer Document and the relevant form of acceptance accompanying the Offer Document, which will contain the full terms and conditions of the Offer, including details of how the Offer may be accepted. **For the avoidance of doubt, the Offer is open to all Shareholders holding the Shares, including those to whom the Offer Document and relevant form of acceptance may not be sent.**

The release, publication or distribution of this Announcement in certain jurisdictions may be restricted by law and therefore persons in any such jurisdictions into which this Announcement is released, published or distributed should inform themselves about and observe such restrictions.

Copies of this Announcement and any formal documentation relating to the Offer are not being, and must not be, directly or indirectly, mailed or otherwise forwarded, distributed or sent in or into or from any jurisdiction where the making of or the acceptance of the Offer would violate the law of that jurisdiction (a "**Restricted Jurisdiction**") and will not be capable of acceptance by any such use, instrumentality or facility within any Restricted Jurisdiction and persons receiving such documents (including custodians, nominees and trustees) must not mail or otherwise forward, distribute or send them in or into or from any Restricted Jurisdiction.

The Offer (unless otherwise determined by the Offeror and permitted by applicable law and regulation) will not be made, directly or indirectly, in or into, or by the use of mails of, or by any means or instrumentality (including, without limitation, telephonically or electronically) of interstate or foreign commerce of, or any facility of a national, state or other securities exchange of, any Restricted Jurisdiction and the Offer will not be capable of acceptance by any such use, means, instrumentality or facilities.

The ability of the Shareholders who are not resident in Singapore to accept the Offer may be affected by the laws of the relevant jurisdictions in which they are located. Persons who are not resident in Singapore should inform themselves of, and observe, any applicable requirements.

12. ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE COMPANY AND THE OFFER

Following the completion of the Proposed Distribution, the Company has ceased to be a subsidiary of TMG and will not be using the SGXNET system. All information relating to the Company and all documents and announcements relating to the Offer following this Announcement would be made available only through the Company's corporate website at www.rsph.sg. Shareholders should refer to the Company's corporate website for information.

13. RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTORS

The directors of the Offeror (the "**Directors**") (including those who may have delegated detailed supervision of this Announcement) have taken all reasonable care to ensure that the facts stated and opinions expressed in this Announcement are fair and accurate and that no material facts have been omitted from this Announcement, the omission of which would make any statement in this Announcement misleading, and they jointly and severally accept full responsibility accordingly.

Where any information in this Announcement has been extracted or reproduced from published or publicly available sources or obtained from the Company, the sole responsibility of the Directors has been to ensure, through reasonable enquiries, that such information is accurately and correctly extracted from such sources or, as the case may be, accurately reflected or reproduced in this Announcement.

Issued by

PRIMEPARTNERS CORPORATE FINANCE PTE. LTD.

for and on behalf of

RSP TOPCO PTE. LTD.

31 January 2019

Any inquiries relating to this Announcement or the Offer should be directed during office hours to:

PrimePartners Corporate Finance Pte. Ltd.
Tel: +65 6229 8088

Forward-Looking Statements

All statements other than statements of historical facts included in this Announcement are or may be forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements include but are not limited to those using words such as "seek", "expect", "anticipate", "estimate", "believe", "intend", "project", "plan", "strategy", "forecast" and similar expressions or future or conditional verbs such as "will", "would", "should", "could", "may" and "might". These statements reflect the current expectations, beliefs, hopes, intentions or strategies of the party making the statements regarding the future and assumptions in light of currently available information. Such forward-looking statements are not guarantees of future performance or events and involve known and unknown risks and uncertainties. Accordingly, actual results or outcomes may differ materially from those described in such forward-looking statements. Shareholders and investors should not place undue reliance on such forward-looking statements, and PPCF and the Offeror do not undertake any obligation to update publicly or revise any forward-looking statements.

Appendix I

Shareholding of the LEH Concert Party Group⁽¹⁾
in the Company as at the Offer Announcement Date

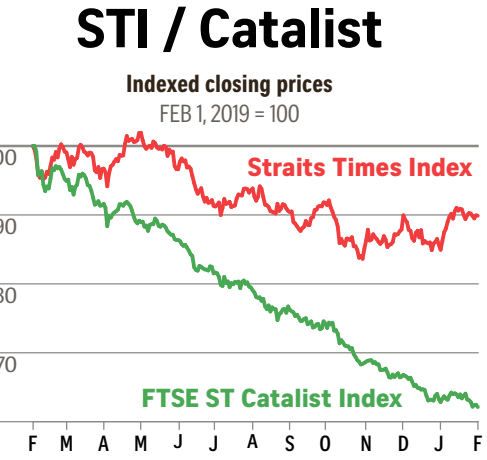
Name	Shareholdings (No. of Shares)	Percentage based on issued Shares as at the date hereof ⁽²⁾ (%)
Lim Eng Hock ⁽³⁾	21,333,333,334	81.85
Jovina Investments Limited ⁽⁴⁾	967,311,317	3.71
Belilton International Limited ⁽⁴⁾	586,347,894	2.25
Garville Pte Ltd ^{(4), (5)}	295,778,882	1.13
Total⁽⁶⁾	23,182,771,427	88.95⁽⁷⁾

Notes:

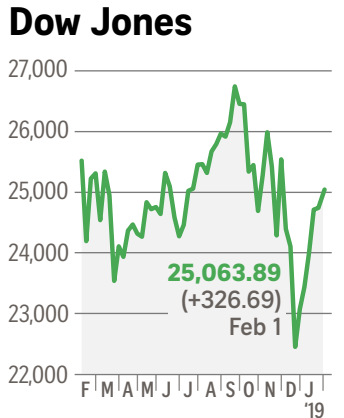
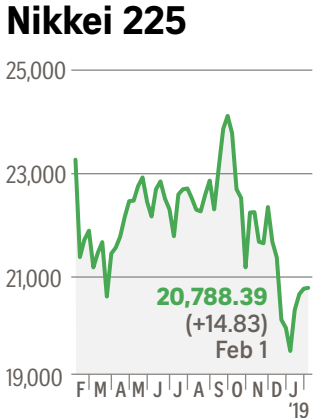
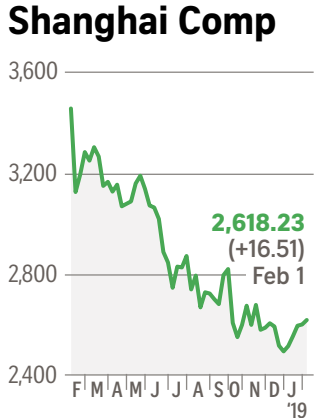
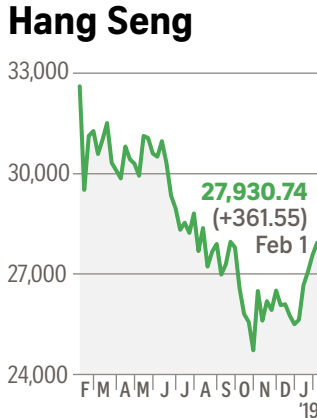
- (1) "**LEH Concert Party Group**" means Mr Lim Eng Hock, Jovina Investments Limited, Belilton International Limited, Garville Pte Ltd and Garville (Hong Kong) Limited. For the avoidance of doubt, the LEH Concert Party Group does not include Tunku Ismail Idris Sultan Ibrahim Ismail (who had previously been ruled to be acting in concert with Mr Lim Eng Hock in relation to TMG). Tunku Ismail Idris Sultan Ibrahim Ismail will not be making the Offer and Mr Lim Eng Hock acts independently of Tunku Ismail Idris Sultan Ibrahim Ismail. Based on publicly available information, Tunku Ismail Idris Sultan Ibrahim Ismail holds 556,466,755 Shares representing approximately 2.14% of the issued and paid-up share capital of the Company.
- (2) The issued share capital of the Company as at the date hereof comprises 26,063,895,035 Shares.
- (3) This comprises only Mr Lim Eng Hock's direct interests in the Shares.
- (4) Mr Lim Eng Hock is deemed interested in the Shares held by Jovina Investments Limited, Belilton International Limited, Garville Pte Ltd and Garville (Hong Kong) Limited by virtue of Section 4 of the SFA.
- (5) Garville Pte Ltd directly owns 111,930,588 Shares and is deemed interested in the 183,848,294 Shares held by Garville (Hong Kong) Limited by virtue of Section 4 of the SFA.
- (6) This comprises Mr Lim Eng Hock's direct and deemed interests in the Shares.
- (7) Any discrepancies relating to percentages or the totals thereof are due to rounding.

WEEKLY

Straits Times Index
Feb 1, 2019
3,188.68 ↓
-13.57 (-0.42%)
Current streak
1 day
Week high
3,199.50
Week low
3,174.38
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)



FTSE ST Catalyst Index
Feb 1, 2019
300.24 ↓
-4.90 (-1.61%)
Current streak
1 day
Week high
303.83
Week low
300.24
52-week high
483.36 (Feb 2, 2018)
52-week low
300.24 (Feb 1, 2019)



NOTE: Based on Friday's figures. Source: BLOOMBERG

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	273	+2	70052	5.9	1.3
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	187xd	-3	84080	4.7	1
380	298	CapitalLand	335	+5	38212	3.6	0.2
242	195	CapitaMall Trust	336	unch	62488	4.9	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	905	-1	12692	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	239	+6	42238	4.4	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2407	-15	18098	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US905	-43	2742	2.3	1
136	85.5	Genting Sing	110	+4	158239	3.2	1.7
38.5	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25.5	-15	72327	3.2	0.6
40.5	23	HPH Trust USD	US255	unch	52031	10.3	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US683	-24	13826	2.9	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6669	+68	1338	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US3833	+49	1002	0.8	0.4
4012	2766	Jardine C&C	3751	+25	1595	3.1	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp	604cd	-16	19021	5	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1145	-2	20639	3.2	1.2
564	455	SATS	482	-3	7141	3.7	3.3
826	672	SGX	759xd	+2	13714	4	9.5
1184	914	SIA	963	-9	6051	4.2	0.8
292	231	SPH	248	-4	16111	5.2	1.1
375	319	ST Engineering	374	+6	19501	4	5.5
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	258	-6	16379	1.9	0.7
358	283	Singtel	302	-3	72327	6.8	1.7
92.5	57.5	ThaiBev	76cd	+2	95957	0.8	3.7
3037	2380	UOB	2534	-54	11407	3.9	1.2
10	591	UOL	664	-2	6541	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1588	+7	6976	3.8	2
335	297	Wilmar Intl	334	+6	22878	3	1
162	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	142	+7	103891	3.2	1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	273	+2	70052	5.9	1.3
123	105	Ascott Reit	120cd	+4	24218	6	1
75	59	Bumitama Agri	68	-3.5	2388	1.1	1.6
178	143	CDL H Tru	167cd	+10	15960	-	1.1
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	187xd	-3	84080	4.7	1
380	298	CapitalLand	335	+5	38212	3.6	0.2
242	195	CapitaMall Trust	236	unch	62488	4.9	1.2
167	133	CapitaR China Tr	148cd	+6	14237	6.8	0.9
1359	780	CityDev	905	-1	12692	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	239	+6	42238	4.4	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2407	-15	18098	5.9	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US905	-43	2742	2.3	1
190	150	Far East H Trust	55.5	+3	13892	-	0.8
150	59	First Resources	171	-3	3530	4	2.2
231	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	226	-3	6794	5.3	108.7
115	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	111	+5	34833	6.2	12
136	85.5	Genting Sing	110	+4	158239	3.2	1.7
38.5	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25.5	-15	72327	3.2	0.6
226	167	GuocoLand Ltd	181	-5	886	3.9	0.6
40.5	23	HPH Trust USD	US255	unch	52031	10.3	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US683	-24	13826	2.9	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6669	+68	1338	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US3833	+49	1002	0.8	0.4
4012	2766	Jardine C&C	3751	+25	1595	3.1	1.8
58	44.5	Keppel Corp	604cd	-16	19021	5	1
127	108	Keppel Reit	118	unch	36175	4.7	0.8
215	151	M1	205cd	-1	2799	5.5	3.6
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US193	unch	801	1.6	1.4
180	152	Mapletree Com Tr	174	-3	58965	5.2	12
208	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	201	-2	21364	5.8	14
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	137	-2	65706	5.6	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	102	unch	75328	6.1	0.9
83.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr	78	+0.5	24132	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1145	-2	20639	3.2	1.2
215	136	OUE	152	+5	2132	2	0.3
915	64.5	OUE H Tru	74cd	+5	9928	-	1
250	157	Olam Intl	184	+2	2977	4.1	0.9
59	28	Oxley	30	+1	16422	5	0.9
300	256	ParkwayLife Reit	285	+11	4540	4.5	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	111	-1	3640	2	2.6
564	455	SATS	482	-3	7141	3.7	3.3
826	672	SGX	759xd	+2	13714	4	9.5
1184	914	SIA	963	-9	6051	4.2	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	250	-3	1160	5.2	1.9
292	231	SPH	248	-4	16111	5.2	1.1
103	98	SPHREIT	102	unch	3573	5.4	1.1
375	319	ST Engineering	374	+6	19501	4	5.5
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	258	-6	16379	1.9	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	159	-4	26314	1.3	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	48.5	+7.5	8167	6.2	7
147	88.5	SingPost	96.5cd	-0.5	11270	3.6	1.3
358	283	Singtel	302	-3	72327	6.8	1.7
290	158	StarHub	182	unch	7993	8.8	5.6
76	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	72cd	+0.5	10715	6.3	0.8
205	163	Suntec Reit	190	-3	62892	5.3	0.9
92.5	57.5	ThaiBev	76cd	+2	95957	0.8	3.7
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.8	+0.3	179727	-	2.8
3037	2380	UOB	2534	-54	11407	3.9	1.2
910	591	UOL	664	-2	6541	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1588	+7	6976	3.8	2
335	297	Wilmar Intl	334	+6	22878	3	1
241	183	Wing Tai	203	unch	2006	3.9	0.5
162	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	142	+7	103891	3.2	1
186	116	Yanlord Land	128	-2	12269	5.3	0.5

Price and volume movers

	VOL	CLOSE(\$)	CHANGE	+/-
Sakae	10.0	0.120	-0.030	-20.00
Sinjia Land	10.0	0.009	-0.006	-40.00
PS Capital	1021	0.009	-0.004	-30.77
Jackspeed	21.0	0.143	-0.022	-13.33
Amplefield Ltd	1099.0	0.025	+0.003	+13.64
Wong Fong Ind	105.0	0.150	+0.013	+9.49
Shanghai Turbo	10	0.990	+0.090	+10.00
Overseas Edu	300.0	0.320	+0.020	+6.67
United Food	5.7	0.192	+0.040	+26.32
LionGold	4,000.1	0.002	+0.001	+100.00

Shows the stocks with the highest combination of price change and of daily activity relative to the three-month average volume

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	139 cd	+1	1257	7.4	1
70	48	Accordia Golf Tr	55	+0.5	6610	7	0.6
89.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	83.5	+0.5	6521	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	111	+1	9088	5.5	1.3
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13	unch	14214	50	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	59	unch	1916	1.7	0.8
281	115	Best World	270	+2	6656	15	9.7
85.5	76	Boustead	79.5	unch	417	3.8	12
126	79.5	BreadTalk	87.5	-15	506	8	2.3
652	521	Bukit Sembawang	556	-8	131	3.2	1.1
88	65.5	Cache Log Trust	71xd	-4	15451	8.3	1.1
52.5	39.5	Centurion	40.5	-0.5	1450	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	117	+2	5474	3.8	1
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	37	+15	2007	1.3	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	129	+2	3433	2.3	1.4
104	64	Chip Eng Seng	70.5	+1	6084	5.7	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	35.5	unch	24834	-	15
700	302	Delong	584	-15	51	-	0.6
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	20.5cd	+0.5	842	9	1.3
78.5	67.5	EC World Reit	72.5	+0.5	1568	8.3	0.8
59	47	ESR-REIT	51.5	unch	12801	7.5	1.1
141	92	First Reit	110	+6	7767	7.8	1.1
150	134	Fraser's Com Tr	149	+6	20154	6.4	1
81.5	66.5	Fraser's H Trust	74	+2.5	5096	-	1
26.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	19.9	+0.2	4066	5	12
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	77.5	-2	1034	3	2.4
67.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	54	-1	435	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	92	+1	22041	27.2	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	265	+2	335	4.9	0.6
81.5	71	IREIT Global	75	+1	371	7.9	1
40.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	22	unch	3791	-	0.3
86.9	53	Japfa	82	+1	14539	0.6	15
149	128	KSH	51.5	-0.5	200	4.3	0.9
2	189	Keppel DC Reit	66xd	-2	4472	9.4	0.6
119	7	Keppel T&T	188	+1	1113	-	12
77.5	44.5	KrisEnergy	8.5	unch	67027	-	1
42.5	18	Lian Beng	49	-0.5	4061	4.6	0.4
53	30	Lippo Malls Tr	24.5	+2.5	38129	14	0.9
98.5	69.5	MM2 Asia	31.5	-15	1810	-	1.8
120	95	ManulifeReit USD	84.5	+0.5	7244	6.5	0.8
25	5	Metro	99.5	unch	337	5	0.6
66.4	45	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
66.5	54	OUE Com Reit	51.5cd	+2.5	14831	6.8	0.7
46	17	PEC	57.5	-1	44	3.5	0.6
64.5	44.5	POSH	19	+0.6	329	-	0.6
113	55.5	Q&M Dental	50	+0.5	439	3.2	3.6
124	96	QAF Ltd	70	+0.5	280	7.1	0.8
55	22	Riverstone	114	+3	297	2	3.7
6	45	SiLC Environment	33	+2	2041	-	0.6
119	90	Sabana Reit	41xd	-0.5	2263	7.8	0.7
25.5	3.3	Sheng Siong	112	+1	3365	2.9	6.2
69	56	Sino Grandness	5.9	-11	52851	-	0.1
129	80.5	SolihulBizReit	60.5	-15	5980	8.7	1
48	32.5	Tianjin ZX USD	87	+2.5	1249	-	0.7
136	54	Tuan Sing	39.5cd	+0.5	6798	2.3	0.4
112	58.5	UMS	63	+0.5	13183	7.9	1.5
15.9	8.3	Valuetronics	70	+0.5	11495	6.5	160.3
50	24	Ying Li Intl	11.9	-0.4	19649	-	0.3
35	16.1	Yoma Strategic	33	-1.5	19349	0.8	0.5
		Yongnam	17.7	+0.2	879	-	0.3

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OBITUARIES

*All the way my Saviour leads me
Oh the fullness of his love
Perfect rest to me is promised
In my Father's house above*



Chan Poh Neo, Bessie

Age: 90

Was called home to be with Jesus on 02 February 2019.
Leaving behind her much loved ones.

Brother: Chan Chin Bock
Sister-in-law: Rose Chan

Niece:
Grace Ling Chan

Wake is held at Church of St Stephen, Prayer Room 2,
30 Sallim Road, Singapore 387639.

Cortege will leave Church of St Stephen on Monday
04 February 2019 at 1.00pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1
for cremation at 2.05pm.

No wreaths, please.

Bess's family is grateful to:

Her cousins - Doreen Tan and Chan Tiong Hin
for their kindness and loving care
given to Bess in recent years

Her medical and nursing team at TTSH
Lion's Home for Elders at which she resided
for the last 14 years

Pastor Melvin Koh and Bess's friends at
Wesley Methodist Church

Yeo Yong Phuang PBM

Age: 89

Passed away peacefully on 2 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Tay Wang Hua (deceased)

Brothers:
Yeh Yong Hua
Yeoh Yong Ngaiap

Sisters:
Yeoh Sieow Tng (deceased)
Yeo Siew Kee
Ee Soi Soi

Son:
Yeo Yn Ling

Daughters:
Yeo Hwee Ling
Yeo Hwee Yng

Grandsons:
Yeo Hung Yih
Yeo Hung Kye
Daniel Chong
Tan E-Reng
Tan De-Reng

Sisters-in-law:
See Cheng Cheng
Shirley Koh Mee Hiang

Brothers-in-law:

Tham Quek Him (deceased)
Chin Kin Seng (deceased)

Daughter-in-law:
Chan Wai Leng

Sons-in-law:
Stephen Chong
Tan Tyginn

Granddaughters:
Yeo Lynn Lyi
Rachel Chong
Rebecca Chong

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 5, Ruby Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.

Cortege leaves on Wednesday 6 February 2019 at 9.05am
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 10.05am.

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the
race, I have kept the faith."* 2 Tim 4:7



GOH CHIN

Age: 79

was called home to be with the Lord on 2 February
2019, leaving behind loved ones.

Husband: Allen Cheng Yew Kit

Sons:
Alex Cheng Hau
Arthur Cheng Wee

Daughter:
Amelia Cheng Nah

Grandsons:
Ares Cheng Yao Tong
Adriel Cheng
Koa Toyama
J-Ya Toyama

Sister-in-law:
Tay Kwee Ten

Brothers:
Goh Chong
Goh Bok

Sisters:
Goh Sook

Goh Kiat
Goh Xiao Mei

Daughter-in-law:
Cindy Ng Siew Wan

Son-in-law:
Koichiro Toyama

Brother-in-law:
Liang Teng Chuan (deceased)

Sister-in-law:

Chang Yu-Chen

Brother-in-law:
Steven Wong Meng Sun
(deceased)

all relatives and friends

Wake is held at Blk 38 Sin Ming Drive #01-527,
S'pore 575712 (Chapel of Light).

Night service will be held on
Monday, 4 February 2019 at 8pm.

Cortege leaves on Tuesday, 5 February 2019
at 10am for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2
for cremation at 11am.



Krishnaveny d/o Krishnaswamy

Age: 55

Passed away peacefully on
3 February 2019, dearly missed and
fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Subramaniam

Daughters & Sons-in-law:

Nishalmi & Vokesh Nair

Sharmila & Ram Aravind

Son & Daughter-in-law:

Vicknesan & Umadhereshini

Granddaughter: Jivisha Nair

Siblings:

Kokilavany, Poojaneswari,

Arasu and Kalikanthan

And all relatives and friends.

Amma is resting at Block 238

Bukit Panjang Ring Road,

#05-95, Singapore 670238.

Cortege leaves on Monday

4 February 2019 at 4.30pm

for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4

for cremation at 6.30pm.

Tel: 9456 8709



CHAN YUET KHEW

Departed: 4 February 2018

*Deeply missed & always
remembered with
gratitude by family
and loved ones.*

ANNOUNCEMENT

Our customer service counter
at Toa Payoh North
is open today
from 8.30am to 5pm
for the booking
of obituaries.

We will be closed
tomorrow, Feb 5.

ST Classifieds

Om Sai Ram



Vengadasamy Rajoo

Age: 63

Passed away peacefully on 3 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Meenakshi

Daughters & Sons-in-law:
Pradha & Vignesh
Sudha & Karthik

Grandchildren: Tarren & Llara
Siblings: Murthi Raju, Jayalachimy,
Sulosana Bai and Selva Raju

And all relatives and friends.

He is resting at 3 Jalan Derum, Singapore 759416.

Cortege leaves on Monday 4 February 2019 at 5.30pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 6.30pm.



In memory of
a loved one



In memory of
a loved one

*"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want...
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*
Psalm 23



Johnny Yew Chin Han

Age: 85

Was called home to be with the Lord on 2 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Annie Boey

Sons:
Jude Yew
Johnathan Yew

Godson:
Victor Wee

Grandchildren:
Amelia Yew, Aiden Yew and Sophie Yew

Daughters-in-law:
Serene Koh
Carol Yew

And all relatives and friends.

Wake at Block 303 Shunfu Road, Singapore 570303.

Night prayers on Tuesday and Wednesday,
5 and 6 February 2019 at 8.45pm.

Cortege will leave on Thursday 7 February 2019 at 10.30am for
Funeral Mass at Church of the Holy Spirit, 248 Upper Thomson
Road, Singapore 574371 at 11.00am, thereafter to
Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 12.45pm.

*The family would like to thank Doctors and Nurses from
TTSH and the staff from Assisi Hospice Day Care.*

*"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want...
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*
Psalm 23



Tan Bock Hwee @Tan Kah Whee

Age: 87

Was called home to be with the Lord on 3 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Sons:

Tan Kian Koon

Tan Kian Gay

Daughter:

Cherise Tan Twun Siew

Grandsons:

Michael Tan Teck Xin

William Kai Loewen

Ian Tan Teck Qian

Daughters-in-law:

Chen Xiao Hong

Lee Hwe Leng

Granddaughters:

Jinan May Loewen

Fion Tan Shi En

All relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 3, Jade Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.

Night service on Monday 4 February 2019 at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Tuesday 5 February 2019 at 2.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 3.00pm.



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SPORT

67

SECONDS SERENA TEOH SHAVED OFF THE SINGAPORE HALF MARATHON RECORD C7



Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford (No. 10) celebrating scoring his goal with Luke Shaw and other teammates yesterday as the Red Devils beat Leicester 1-0 to keep their hopes of a top-four finish alive.

Below: The striker opened the scoring in the ninth minute, taking a lofted ball from Paul Pogba into his stride before finishing cleanly into the back of the net. United are two points behind Chelsea in fourth. PHOTO: REUTERS

RASHFORD IN FORM OF LIFE

He scores sixth goal in Solskjaer's 10 games in charge as United close in on top-four finish

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Leicester 0
Manchester United 1

LONDON • The Ole Gunnar Solskjaer bandwagon rolls on.

For the first time since the days when Sir Alex Ferguson was in charge, back in the 2012-13 season, Manchester United have racked up five successive away victories.

The latest came courtesy of another goal from Marcus Rashford, who marked his 100th Premier League appearance in style with his sixth goal in Solskjaer's 10 games in charge.

From Leicester's perspective, it was an awful goal to concede.

Ricardo Pereira, picking up the ball deep inside the Leicester half, played a loose and careless pass

that was intended for Nampalys Mendy.

Paul Pogba easily cut the ball out and flighted a perfectly weighted pass in behind Harry Maguire and Ben Chilwell. Rashford cushioned the ball beautifully with his first touch and thrashed it home powerfully and unerringly with his second, giving Kasper Schmeichel no chance with nine minutes gone.

At that stage, United were in total control, playing with freedom and confidence and it was easy to fear for Leicester.

Yet slowly but surely, Claude Puel's side managed to eke their way back into the game and cause United a few problems at the other end.

Leicester looked particularly dangerous from corners, where James Maddison's excellent delivery was causing consternation in the

BATTLING WIN

That pass by Paul Pogba is great and the control by Marcus better. Football is a game of mistakes. Our lads, when we make mistakes, they were fighting for the ball and giving their all.

“OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAEER, Manchester United interim manager, in awe over his side's goal and display against Leicester.



United area. Jonny Evans, the former United defender, was unlucky to see a glancing header drift wide.

It was Maddison who had Leicester's best chance during that period. The ball broke kindly to the midfielder after ricocheting between a couple of United players, and everything pointed to an equaliser when he prepared to shoot from little more than 12 yards out, only for Luke Shaw to get across and make a superb block.

United seemed to be playing within themselves a little, almost as if they felt they could coast and only occasionally go through the gears.

Rashford, set free by Ander Herrera, had a chance on the stroke of half-time when his low shot from the edge of the area was saved by Schmeichel, but that was the first

time that United had seriously threatened since early on.

Leicester continued to press for an equaliser after the interval and Jamie Vardy came close to providing it with an acrobatic effort from 12 yards. Maddison's free kick struck the wall, looped up and dropped invitingly for the striker, who swivelled before hitting a powerful shot that de Gea gathered at the second attempt.

That turned out to be Maddison's last act, with Puel's decision to withdraw Leicester's most creative player with just under half an hour remaining an unpopular one with the home supporters.

Rachid Ghezzal came on for Maddison and Demarai Gray moved into the No. 10 role. Curiously, though, Gray lasted only 12 minutes before he was substituted.

Ghezzal did force de Gea into a spectacular save with a 30-yard free kick that the Spaniard clawed away from his top corner.

Set pieces continued to offer Leicester's best hope of a goal. Another Ghezzal free kick, this time crossed into the area from out wide, was headed back across goal by Maguire only for Evans to completely miss his kick.

Then came late chances for Vardy and Maguire, after Schmeichel had denied substitutes Romelu Lukaku and Anthony Martial.

Both could have given the visitors some breathing space by adding a second but, in the end, it mattered little, as United defended resolutely to hold on for a victory that continues their charge for a Champions League berth. THE GUARDIAN

Blues manager hails Higuain-Hazard partnership

LONDON • Maurizio Sarri has tried everything this season in a bid to solve Chelsea's scoring woes from persisting with Olivier Giroud and Alvaro Morata despite their slump in form to playing Eden Hazard as a "false nine".

But, until last month's arrival of Gonzalo Higuain, on loan from Juventus until the end of the season, the Blues' attack has not quite lived up to the fans' expectations of "Sarri-ball".

While the goals have dried up, they have also been conceding at the other end, with Sarri under pressure following their heaviest Premier League defeat for 23 years in a

shock 4-0 loss at Bournemouth last Wednesday.

Having suffered two successive losses in the league and sack rumours swirling, the Italian was indebted to Higuain, who opened his Blues account with a brace, and a double from Hazard as the pair inspired the home team to a 5-0 trouncing of rock-bottom Huddersfield on Saturday.

Although the Argentina striker failed to reproduce his best form while on loan at AC Milan earlier this season – scoring only eight goals in 20 appearances – he came to Stamford Bridge at his manager's behest after their successful

spell together at Napoli.

And the 31-year-old, on his home league debut, demonstrated why Sarri was desperate for his signature as his presence up front enabled Hazard to return to his preferred position on the flanks, where he is at his most dangerous.

Not only did Chelsea look a far more vibrant team, it was also their biggest win of the season, with David Luiz adding the fifth.

Afterwards, Sarri told reporters he was encouraged by the link-up play between Higuain and Hazard.

He said: "I'm really very happy because apart from the goals, he (Higuain) is really very suitable to

play very close to Eden. On the pitch, they are really very suitable to play one close to the other.

"For us, that is very useful. It will be useful for Higuain – he will be able to score goals for us – and also useful for Eden. I know very well that, when he arrived, he wasn't at the top of his physical condition. Now, he is improving."

While it is still early days with the Belgium forward playing only his second game alongside Higuain, there are signs that the budding partnership can flourish.

According to Sky Sports, Hazard found him seven times during the Terriers game – more passes than

he has made to Giroud or Morata in any league game this season.

However, with the stinging defeat by the Cherries fresh in his mind, Sarri warned his side that they still needed "to improve the mentality".

He added: "As I said before, we have to arrive at every match with the same level of determination and motivation, and we don't need to lose a match to have the right motivation."

"So, we need to improve. We need to understand that, in the future, we should not have to lose a game to add motivation."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

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OPERATING CONCEPT CAN WORK WITH CHANGES

Experts say Sports Hub model still viable but parties must be clear on targets, expectations

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Despite a spate of high-profile issues in recent years, the public-private partnership (PPP) between the Singapore Sports Hub and the Singapore Government can still work but only if there's a shift in mindset and a better aligning of goals and expectations between the two parties.

That is the view of industry insiders The Straits Times spoke to, following the unexpected resignation of Sports Hub chief executive officer Oon Jin Teik on Jan 28.

He departed his role after just a year following what is understood to be a fundamental disagreement between him and the SportsHub Pte Ltd (SHPL) board on the direction of the Sports Hub.

The 55-year-old was the latest to get caught up in the delicate balancing act between the public sector's social objectives and the private sector's profit motive.

Oon had been seen as an inspired choice to balance the social and commercial objectives of the Hub, having served as the CEO of SportSG's predecessor, the Singapore Sports Council (SSC), from 2004 to 2010, before moving to the other side of the fence as senior executive at Hyflux from 2011 to 2014, and then as the Sports Hub's chief operating officer from 2014.

His departure has raised the question of whether the PPP model is viable where the Hub is concerned. The SHPL is a private consortium comprising four equity partners – Infrared Capital Partners, Dragages Singapore, Global Spectrum Pico and Cushman & Wakefield Facilities & Engineering – who operate the \$1.33 billion facility.

Ludwig Reichhold, who was the managing director of construction firm Dragages Singapore through the entire realisation of the Sports Hub project, noted that the type of PPP contract "has certainly put a lot of constraints" which made it difficult to manage because of its "size and complexity".

He noted that the Sports Hub was originally conceived – first in 2001 – as a home for football, requiring close cooperation with the Football Association of Singapore (FAS).

But local football has since languished, with the national team suffering group-stage exits in three consecutive AFF Suzuki Cups over the last five years, and the Un-

der-23 squad suffering the same failure in successive SEA Games. The S-League, and its successor, the Singapore Premier League, have also struggled to gain traction with fans.

"The difficulties football has faced in Singapore in recent years has basically cut away the mainstay of the project," said Reichhold, who has been an independent consultant in real estate and construction for the past three years.

"Given the current state of football development in Singapore, I believe that the (Sports Hub) probably has to be focused more on entertainment, commercial and social activities in the short term to maximise its use and ensure its success with the public."

He added that he believes the Sports Hub has "great potential" given its state-of-the-art facilities, easy access and commercial space, but "its purpose and plans have to be redefined in line with current policies and priorities".

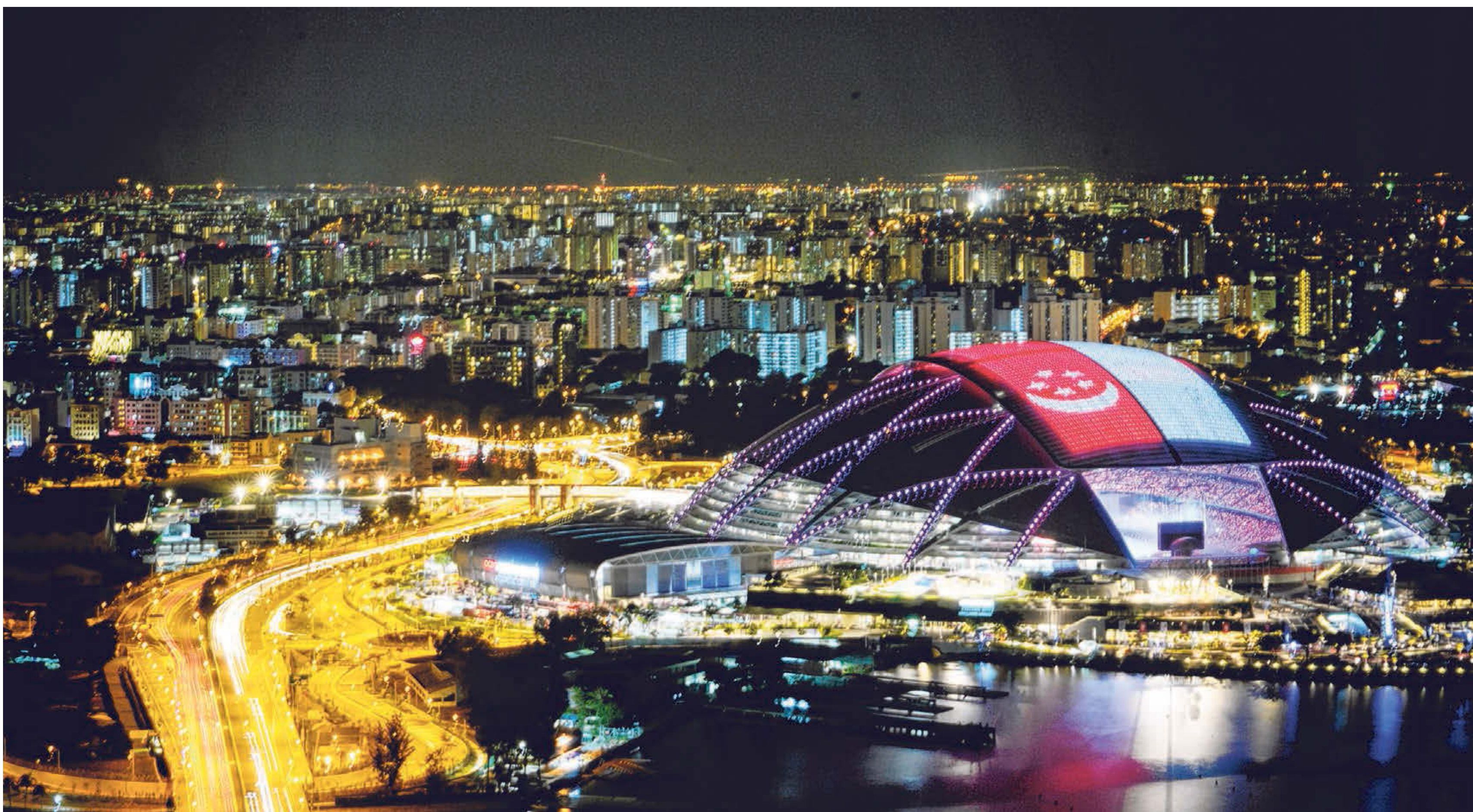
This redefinition could eventually necessitate new investment in the Sports Hub which he notes is difficult to implement within the existing PPP contract frame.

Under the arrangement, SHPL bore the costs of constructing the Sports Hub, with the Government making annual payments of \$193.7 million over a period of 25 years starting from 2010.

In the 2008 SSC announcement that the Singapore Sports Hub Consortium (SSHC) had been selected as the preferred bidder for the project, then Minister for Community Development, Youth & Sports Vivian Balakrishnan had noted that "SSHC provided a holistic strategy to promote sports participation, leisure, entertainment and lifestyle activities via a focus on community and grassroots sports. Its integrated approach will create foot traffic and promote vibrancy at the Sports Hub."

"Their strategy is supported by a comprehensive sporting calendar that guarantees at least 90 event days at the National Stadium and 46 at the Singapore Indoor Stadium (which was opened much earlier in 1990). It consists of a well-balanced mix of local, regional and international sporting events and activities targeted at various different target segments."

The announcement also noted that the net present value of the total costs the Government will pay over the 25-year tenure amounts to



\$1.87 billion.

National sports agency Sport Singapore meets SHPL regularly over operational and programming matters but is not involved in key decision-making processes.

One source who has followed the issue closely also believes the PPP model is suitable for the Sports Hub, given the modern demands and commercial objectives that are married to the running of a major football stadium today.

However, he felt that the very structure of the SHPL is flawed, and raised a question of conflict of interest. "A lot of the disagreements stem from the fact that a lot of times, the partner is also the contractor," said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"For example, when there is an event, (facility management partner) Cushman & Wakefield are supposed to take care of the facilities. "SHPL are supposed to get as much revenue as possible from services, but this may not be the case as the contractors are also partners, and board members."

"If someone points out the Sports Hub should derive more value from contractors, the board will jump on them and say, 'Why are you affecting my profit?'"

"The current consortium is such

that every partner is just focused on earning as much revenue as possible and taking care of their own profit, and that is a problem."

"If this is not changed, the community objectives of the Hub will never be taken seriously, and will only be a by-product."

In 2016, SHPL also clashed with public stakeholders after setting a \$26 million price tag on 35 extra rehearsal days for the 2016 National Day Parade. The final sum was reported to have been negotiated down to \$10 million.

Asked to respond to the claims, an SHPL spokesman said that it "welcomes feedback" from stakeholders, and maintained that the National Stadium is "well-utilised".

He insisted the Hub is "fully aligned with and supports the Singapore Government's Vision 2030 Sports Masterplan to bond communities through sports, and that sports should be inclusive, accessible, and affordable to all".

He added that discussions are ongoing to "improve focus on securing and delivering events that are strategically important to Singapore and the sports, entertainment and lifestyle ecosystems in Singapore" and SHPL is "constantly exploring ways where we can make the National Stadium more accessible and contribute to Singapore's

ADJUSTMENT NEEDED

The difficulties football has faced in Singapore in recent years has basically cut away the mainstay of the project. Given the current state of football development in Singapore, I believe that the (Sports Hub) probably has to be focused more on entertainment, commercial and social activities in the short term.

LUDWIG REICHOLD, independent real estate and construction consultant, on the likely switch in focus.

BALANCING ACT

SHPL are supposed to get as much revenue as possible from services, but this may not be the case as the contractors are also partners, and board members. If someone points out the Sports Hub should derive more value from contractors, the board will jump on them and say, 'Why are you affecting my profit?'

ASOURCE, on the structure possibly posing a conflict of interest.

sporting development".

The spokesman pointed to the over 210 events that welcomed more than three million visitors to the Hub last year, including the Community Play Days (a quarterly initiative introduced in June 2016 for the public to experience various activities at the Sports Hub for free), Festival of Football and Japan Summer Festival, which "are not intended for profit".

The SHPL's profit-driven approach has created an uneasy alliance between SHPL and SportSG and this has been apparent since the Hub was officially opened in 2014, with the latter not afraid to signal its displeasure publicly.

In its statement after news of Oon's resignation broke, SportSG again said it would "continue to hold (SHPL) accountable for the delivery of a first-class and vibrant sports, entertainment and lifestyle hub for Singaporeans".

James Walton, sports business group leader at Deloitte Singapore and South-east Asia, noted that while there are other world-class stadiums such as the Beijing National Stadium and others in France, Australia and the United States that operate with a PPP model, the Sports Hub was the largest sports facilities infrastructure deal in the world at the time it

was conceived.

He added that the PPP model is not a "one size fits all" and depends on the exact nature of the project.

"One recent study posited that the PPPs that work best are those that are fully commercial rather than the ones that have a 'flagship' status in society and intense public interest," said Walton.

"This was shown in the Sports Hub case by an independent audit that showed a clear lack of alignment between the key stakeholders."

"The audit suggested that the private-sector investors wanted to hold lucrative non-sporting events – which potentially cause issues with the pitches and scheduling – while SportSG wanted the focus to be on sports and community events in line with our national vision for sports."

PPP projects have been successful in Singapore – such as the construction of the Republic's three desalination plants, and the ITE College West campus – but these are utilities- and education-related projects that do not serve the social functions that stadiums do.

One former national sportsman, who also asked not to be named, said that as long as the SHPL and the Government do not align their philosophies, the project will con-

tinue to run "with a split personality".

He believes it is time for the Government to buy back the rights to the Sports Hub – the value is not known – and manage it like the old National Stadium.

"We have to get to the root of the issue," said the retired athlete. "The Government has financed (SHPL), so have they delivered in return?"

"Someone has to be accountable. This is public money and we all contribute to the (\$193.7 million) a year."

He also urged the Government to be transparent about the issue, including any potential breaches in contract, adding: "Show us the mechanisms to fix the problem, and what are our contractual options to exit."

Said Walton: "It is clear that there is still work to be done to align all the stakeholders and agree (on) a common direction."

"But the many successes in hosting major events... show that the Sports Hub can be a success with the right leadership working hand-in-hand with SportSG to deliver the vision. It is early days for the project and it is still a world-class stadium and complex that we should all be proud of."

msazali@sph.com.sg

While the Sports Hub is undoubtedly a world-class facility, the various stakeholders need to align their objectives to balance social obligations and profit motives. ST FILE PHOTO

The Hub: 2014-19

The Singapore Sports Hub has been in the news since the shock resignation of its chief executive officer Oon Jin Teik last week. The former national swimmer's departure was announced last Monday although he will stay at the helm till April.

Here are some key happenings and issues related to this facility in the past five years:

JUNE 2014

SportsHub Pte Ltd (SHPL) opens the doors to the Singapore Sports Hub. The first event held at the \$1.33 billion venue is the South-east Asian Swimming Championships at the OCBC Aquatic Centre.

AUGUST 2014

The National Stadium hosts its first football match as Italian giants Juventus beat a Singapore selection side 5-0. Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri does not play star striker Carlos Tevez, because he fears the pitch's poor quality will result in an injury to the Argentinian.

OCTOBER 2014

Brazil thump Japan 4-0 in an exhibition match, with superstar Neymar scoring all four goals. But defender Filipe Luis calls the pitch "horrible", and Sport Singapore laments that the sandy pitch was a "significant disappointment".

OCTOBER 2014

Singapore risks being stripped of co-hosting rights for the AFF Suzuki Cup because a Jay Chou concert and an exhibition rugby match slated at the Sports Hub just before the tournament contravene Asean Football Federation requirements. The concert was moved and the rugby match was eventually scrapped, but Singapore crashed out at the group stage of the Cup on home soil.

DECEMBER 2014

Sports Hub announces it will replace the problematic pitch with a "lay and play" solution, and bear the full cost.

MAY 2015

The National Stadium's new "lay and play" Eclipse Stabilised Turf is laid, and wins praise for its smooth surface.

JUNE 2015:

The Sports Hub is the main event for the first multi-year live event deal in Asia-Pacific, which will see UFC stage annual Fight Night events at the Singapore Indoor Stadium till 2020.

OCTOBER 2015:

Frenchman Philippe Collin-Delavaud steps down as chief executive officer and is replaced by Manu Sawhney.

DECEMBER 2015

The staging of the 2016 National Day Parade (NDP) is in jeopardy after SHPL sets a \$26 million price tag on 35 extra rehearsal days. The figure was reportedly lowered to \$10 million later, but the total cost of staging the parade at Kallang was estimated to be \$39.4 million, about double

that of the cost of having it at the Marina Bay floating platform. It remains the only time the NDP is staged at the Sports Hub.

JANUARY 2016

SHPL inks its first cost-sharing partnership with the Singapore Rugby Union, where both parties will jointly promote the HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series.

SEPTEMBER 2016

More than 1,500 fans of Taiwanese pop star Jay Chou sign a petition asking for a refund after sound issues plague his Sept 3 concert.

DECEMBER 2016

ST reports that several suite owners are unlikely to renew their contracts with the Sports Hub after a threadbare 2016 events calendar.

MARCH 2017

Parliamentary Secretary for Culture, Community and Youth Baey Yam Keng, speaking in Parliament, urges SHPL to enhance the vibrancy of the Hub and improve the quality of its calendar of events and programming.

APRIL 2017

British band Coldplay put on two blockbuster shows at the National Stadium, putting to bed sound issues of the past.

MAY 2017

Singaporean Sawhney resigns from his CEO post despite being cleared of any wrongdoing following an anonymous letter of complaint about his alleged treatment of staff.

JUNE 2017

Argentina, sans Lionel Messi, beat Singapore 6-0 in an exhibition match to mark the 125th-year anniversary of the Football Association of Singapore.

JANUARY 2018

The WTA announces that Singapore will be replaced by China as the host of the season-ending WTA Finals starting from 2019. It had been staged at the Singapore Indoor Stadium since 2014.

JUNE 2018

The Sports Hub and Singapore Tourism Board announce a strategic partnership with the Ultimate Fighting Championship for the first multi-year live event deal in Asia-Pacific, which will see UFC stage annual Fight Night events at the Singapore Indoor Stadium till 2020.

NOVEMBER 2018

Singapore bids to host the prestigious US\$8.5 million (\$S11.5 million) ATP Finals. A decision is expected by March.

JANUARY 2019

Oon quits. Bryn Jones, the Hub's chairman, will take over as acting CEO until its "global search" for a replacement bears fruit.

Sazali Abdul Aziz

Hammers pack a punch: Klopp

SINGAPORE HORSE RACING

WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2019

First race starts at 1.20pm

Fortune Bowl

Live telecast and totalisator services are available for the above race meeting at the Singapore Racecourse and Off-Course premises.

For the latest updates, visit www.rufclub.com.sg or call the Singapore Turf Club at 6879 1000.

PLAY RESPONSIBLY

For admission to the Club on race days, you must be at least 18 years of age.

LONDON • West Ham may have a raft of injury problems, with a number of key players either missing or rated touch and go, but Jurgen Klopp is not taking their trip to the London Stadium lightly as their opponents are "nearly a top-six side".

Manuel Pellegrini's men are like the walking wounded at the moment, with only 15 players confirmed fit as they host Premier League front runners Liverpool today.

To add to their troubles, Marko Arnautovic, Lukasz Fabianski, Aaron Cresswell and midfielder Samir Nasri are all doubts for the game, but Klopp is still expecting "a really good football team".

At his pre-match press conference, the Liverpool manager said: "They have" the most experienced manager in the Premier League at the moment, really good signings in defence.

"They are experienced in the full-back positions, (Declan) Rice, fantastic development this season next to (Mark) Noble in midfield, experience and youth."

"Then you have the wings - (Felipe) Anderson, fantastic signing, and Arnautovic, an outstanding

striker... That's a really good football team, that's what we have to be ready for."

Despite the praise lavished on the Hammers, it will be a surprise if the Reds do not pick up all three points on their travels, with the German backing his players to handle any "nervous moments" as the season enters squeaky-bum time.

He added: "Yes, there is pressure. There was pressure last year... There were nervous situations last year, two years ago, three years ago."

"That is part of the game of the football. People are in a little bit of

doubt about this and that. I understand yes, but people understand in general."

"This club has not been champions for 29 years. So how can people sit there and watch it like (Manchester) City? I don't know how often they have been champions in the last five or six years."

"We really, the people really, desperately want it, that is how it is, they really want it (the league title). I get that and we try with all we have. But there are no guarantees. I am not a nervous person."

While Liverpool are not as short-handed as West Ham, they will not be able to call on Dejan Lovren, who has a hamstring injury.

Klopp also confirmed that fellow defender Joe Gomez, who has been out since Dec 5 with a fractured leg, will also not be returning to the fold any time before the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie against Bayern Munich on Feb 19 as his rehabilitation "is not exactly going how we want", with another operation likely. REUTERS

WEST HAM V LIVERPOOL

Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, tomorrow, 4am



Despite doubts over key West Ham players such as midfielder Samir Nasri, Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is still expecting to face "a really good football team". PHOTO: REUTERS

Victoria old boys stage comeback



Tomas Eriksson, president of the International Floorball Federation, posing with victorious Victoria School players at Our Tampines Hub yesterday. The ActiveSG-Singapore Floorball Association (SFA) Men's Premier League closed on a high note as close to 1,000 spectators were treated to an exciting finale. Victoria School emerged champions, with the alumni team mounting a spectacular fightback from 3-0 down to score four goals in the last four minutes to stun defending champions Black Wondersticks 4-3 in the final. Eriksson, who is in Singapore on holiday, presented the trophy to the champions with fellow guest of honour Lim Teck Yin (back row, third from left), the chief executive officer of national sports agency Sport Singapore. PHOTO: SINGAPORE FLOORBALL ASSOCIATION

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS

Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Tue, 5 Feb 2019				
Italian League	Frosinone	Lazio	2.00am	LW*
English Premier	West Ham	Liverpool	4.00am	LW*
Italian League	Cagliari	Atalanta	4.00am	LW*
Spanish League	Vallecano	Leganes	4.00am	LW*

LW*: Telecast available at Livewire (Marina Bay Sands) only. Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.

LOTTERY

TOTO

Mon, 4 Feb 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3446/2019

Group 1 Prize \$1,000,000 est.

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994

SINGAPORE SWEEP

Wed, 6 Feb 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 1006

First Prize \$2,300,000

9 sets of 2D winning numbers (315,000 prizes, each \$6)

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.

UP: Livewire (Marina Bay Sands) (21 years and above) only. Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast).

SG: Singapore Pools (21 years and above).

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TEOH SETS HALF MARATHON MARK

She eyes SEA Games after time in Spain beats Mok Ying Rong's national record set in 2016

Nicole Chia

Serena Teoh was in tears five months ago when injury ruled her out of the Munich Marathon in October. But the 31-year-old has reason to start the year with a smile, after setting a national record in the women's half marathon on Jan 27. She clocked 1hr 22min 7sec to finish fourth at the Gran Canaria Half Marathon in Spain, breaking Mok Ying Rong's 2016 mark of 1:23:14. The record is pending ratification by Singapore Athletics. Teoh, who works as a risk analyst in Basel, Switzerland, told The Straits Times the result came as a surprise as she had intended to use the race to gauge her fitness ahead of next month's Tokyo Marathon. "With my prior training, I had con-

fidence in my current fitness level, but I just didn't expect to do so well," said Teoh, who started running more seriously only after she relocated to Switzerland for work four years ago. "In the race, you're just so focused and trying to hold on to the pace that you're not really calculating your end-time... When I saw the clock just before the finish line, I was really happy." Teoh was a swimmer in junior college and was part of the biathlon team in university, but she revealed that she was "not so keen on sports back then". But that changed four years ago when she moved to Switzerland and joined the Basel Running Club. "With the scenery and the climate here, I began to take up running, and then I decided to join a

running club here," said Teoh, who credited her record-breaking feat to the support of her family, her club and training buddies in Singapore whenever she returns home. "With some training and the races I entered, I realised I was becoming faster and, from there, I just kept setting more and more goals." But she faced setbacks as she worked towards achieving some of these goals last year. She fell and suffered a bone bruise in the knee while preparing for last year's Boston Marathon in April – her biggest race since taking up running. She could not recover in time but decided to participate in the race anyway. But the injury took its toll in the last 17km and she limped across the finish line after almost four hours. In August, she started feeling pain in her right calf that persisted over the next two months. She was tested for compartment syndrome, a condition that occurs

when pressure builds within the muscles to levels that can be life-threatening. The tests were negative, but Teoh had missed so many weeks of training by then that she realised she would not make it to the start line of the Munich Marathon. "I went home crying," recalled Teoh, who aims to run two marathons and three or four half marathons each year. "But all these accidents and injuries – they are opportunities that make you learn and grow... I was sad about my situation, but the key was to remain focused and not let myself spiral into self-pity." Teoh's big target this year is to represent Singapore at the Philippines SEA Games at the end of the year and she hopes to meet the qualifying mark at the Tokyo Marathon. The qualifying time for the SEA Games women's marathon in December is 2:58:17, pegged to the bronze-medal time from the previous edition. Teoh hopes to clock around 2:55 in Tokyo. She added: "Training for the marathon takes a lot out of you and puts you through a lot of tests physically, mentally and emotionally, but it also rewards you in many other ways. "When I started four years ago, it was purely out of passion and I wasn't expecting so much but, with passion and consistency, it's quite amazing to see how much your mind and body can achieve."

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Serena Teoh clocked 1hr 22min 7sec at the Gran Canaria Half Marathon in Spain, breaking Mok Ying Rong's 2016 mark of 1:23:14. PHOTO COURTESY OF SERENA TEOH

Slingers go third after ending Knights' streak

Laura Chia

Singapore Slingers coach Neo Beng Siang has cut a frustrated figure too many times for his liking this season, even after victories, as his team were frequently building and frittering away double-digit leads during their Asean Basketball League (ABL) games. Hence it was a welcome change when the 51-year-old broke into a satisfied smile at the end of their 95-76 win over CLS Knights Indonesia at the OCBC Arena yesterday. The Slingers stretched their two-

point first-quarter lead into a 20-point gap by half-time and never looked back as they halted the Knights' streak of seven successive victories, the longest winning run this season. The win propelled his team to third place in the 10-team ABL with a 9-6 win-loss record, and Neo said: "I'm pretty happy with the result. We came out strong at the start and stuck together throughout the game which was really good. "We need to stay focused and play as a team like this every game." The Slingers were aggressive from tip-off and quickly drew three

fouls in the first half from 2.13m Knights centre Darryl Watkins, who would have scored more than his 18 points had he not spent more than 10 minutes on the bench because of early foul trouble. The hosts capitalised on their height advantage, with their 2.06m centre John Fields a constant thorn under the basket with 24 points, 13 rebounds and seven blocks. Fellow American Xavier Alexander also put in an all-action shift with 21 points, nine rebounds and 12 assists. But it was their compatriot Jerran Young who stole the show with his red-hot shooting from within and-

beyond the arc as he converted 15 of his 24 field-goal attempts. He finished with an ABL career-high 36 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists. Knights' captain and former Slinger Wong Wei Long had a game to forget, missing all five of his field-goal shots, scoring just four points from free throws, a far cry from the 18 he plundered when his team beat the Singapore side 89-74 last month. Point guard Desmond Oh, a key part of the Slingers defence that restricted the Knights to below 80 points for only the fourth time in 17 games, said this win will boost the

festive mood within the camp even if they have to travel to Thailand and play Mono Vampire on Wednesday, the second day of Chinese New Year. The 32-year-old said: "The second quarter was the key. We led by 20 points and that really brought us through the third and fourth quarters. We stepped up our defence and made good stops. "We are used to spending holidays away because of competitions. As long as we keep winning, we will celebrate over there."

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Singapore Slingers' Jerran Young dunking two of his ABL career-high 36 points yesterday. He also had 14 rebounds and seven assists as the Slingers beat the CLS Knights Indonesia 95-76 at the OCBC Arena. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

The Slingers' win halted the CLS Knights' seven-game winning streak.

Players confront coach after James-less Lakers' loss

OAKLAND • LeBron James' absence from the Los Angeles Lakers' 115-101 National Basketball Association (NBA) loss to the Golden State Warriors due to "load management" had been the main talking point on Saturday night. That is until word got out that there had been a bust-up in the Lakers' locker room, with several veteran players, including Michael Beasley and JaVale McGee, getting into a heated exchange with coach Luke Walton. According to several tweets from The Athletic's Shams Charania, the spat was "emotionally charged" and only just "stopped short of turning physical".

ESPN corroborated his account, claiming that Beasley and McGee "took exception" to Walton's criticism that the Lakers played like individuals and handled the ball poorly during the defeat. The pair then reportedly brought up his penchant for rotating as the reason why the team have slipped out of play-off contention, dropping to 10th in the West – two games behind the eighth-placed Los Angeles Clippers with a 27-26 record. Although a source later told ESPN's Ramona Shelburne that "it never got close to getting out of control", Lance Stephenson, who had 10 points, was unhappy he had

been named as one of those involved in the feud. Post-game, the guard posted a video on his Instagram account, which was captioned: "I'm in a very happy place, nothing but positive. If u (sic) going to write a story, get the real facts please". Walton's anger at his players was, however, justified as the James-less Lakers had led by as many as 10 points in the third quarter and were still up 89-88 with 11 minutes remaining. But the two-time defending NBA champions never looked back after Andre Iguodala, who finished with 17 points on seven-for-nine shooting, ignited a fourth-quarter run-

away with successive three-pointers. They were paced by a 28-point showing from Klay Thompson. Brandon Ingram had a team-high 20 points for the Lakers, who fell to 6-12 without James in their line-up. While Walton did not directly comment on the post-game scenes that transpired, he did shed some light on James' condition, insisting that he would play in tomorrow's game at the Indiana Pacers. He told ESPN: "Right now, it's more just him being sore after five weeks of not playing basketball." The 15-time All-Star had only returned last Thursday against the Clippers following a 17-game spell on the sidelines. REUTERS

SportsWorld

Johnson holds off Li with late birdies

KING ABDULLAH ECONOMIC CITY • American Dustin Johnson endured a roller-coaster back nine, but birdies on the last two holes handed him a two-shot win in the inaugural Saudi International yesterday. The world No. 3 closed with a three-under 67 to end on 19-under 261, two better than China's Li Haotong, who made a birdie on the last to take second place with a 69.

England's Tom Lewis finished third on 264, while Australian Lee Min-woo, younger brother of LPGA Tour star Min-je, was fourth, one shot behind. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

High jumpers among 12 Russians punished

LONDON • High jumper Ivan Ukhov, who won the gold at the 2012 Olympics, is among 12 Russian track and field athletes to be handed doping bans by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which is acting for the IAAF in the absence of the banned Russian Athletics Federation (Rusaf). Ukhov and Svetlana Shkolina, who won high jump bronze at the London Games and gold at the 2013 World Championships, were given four-year bans on Friday, and retrospectively disqualified, meaning they will be stripped of their medals. Double hammer world champion and former world-record holder Tatyana Lysenko, who had previously been stripped of her 2012 Olympic gold, was given an eight-year ban for a second offence, as was fellow thrower Gulfiya Agafonova. REUTERS

Napoli won't object to Hamsik's China plans

NAPLES • Marek Hamsik is pushing for a move to China and Napoli are ready to give him the opportunity, coach Carlo Ancelotti said on Saturday. Chinese Super League club Dalian Yifang are reported to be close to ending the Slovakia midfielder's 11-year stay in Naples. Ancelotti confirmed to Sky Sport Italia that the Napoli captain, who overtook Diego Maradona's club record of 115 goals last season and has made more appearances (520) than any other player in their history, "is in negotiations and wants to have another experience". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SPORT

Super Bowl 2019

WINNING IS PART OF BRADY'S DNA

Patriots quarterback, 41, eyeing a historic sixth NFL title in showdown with the Rams

ATLANTA • From smashing a golf club into the ground in frustration as a boy to pulling off the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history, refusal to accept defeat has been a recurring theme of Tom Brady's life.

In the eyes of many, the New England Patriots star has long settled the debate of whether he is the greatest quarterback the National Football League (NFL) has ever seen.

Nearly two decades at the pinnacle of his sport have yielded five Super Bowl titles and an array of records that, in all probability, will never be beaten.

Brady, 41, could become the oldest quarterback in history to win the NFL's championship game this morning (Singapore time) when he leads the Patriots against the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl LIII – his ninth – itself another record.

In an era of ever-shorter NFL careers – the average shelf life of a quarterback is just over three years, according to a 2016 Wall Street Journal study – Brady has added Father Time to a long list of his vanquished opponents.

Brady, who won the first of his five Super Bowl rings in 2002 when the Patriots upset the then St Louis Rams, admits he finds it surreal to still be chasing titles 17 bruising years after his first. "No one ever imagines these things," he told reporters in Atlanta.

"The goal when I was a kid was to be a professional athlete. And I've been a professional athlete for a long time. I couldn't have asked for anything better."

The cornerstone of his career – a white-hot competitive streak – has burnt with a vengeance during the Patriots' journey to the showpiece at Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

Irked by the suggestion that the Patriots were a dynasty in decline, Brady has framed the five-time Super Bowl champions as unlikely underdogs, uniting supporters around a rallying cry of "We're still here."

"It's just part of who I am, part of my DNA," Brady said. "Those motivations run deep. When I get them scratched at, it's great motivation for me. It's just a part of who I am."

"Some people are born with great height. Some people are born with great size or great speed. Some people are born with things that are more intangible."

"I think competitiveness and the ability to compete has been an attribute for me and my whole family."

"It started when I was young. My parents always encouraged me to shoot for the stars. I still feel that

way now. People say, 'You're 41, what are you doing? Why are you still playing?'. But I still feel like I'm shooting for the stars."

Learning to manage his competitiveness wasn't always easy though.

He recalled throwing a tantrum on a golf course when his father, Tom Brady Sr, took him to play nine holes en route to a San Francisco Giants baseball game.

"On the sixth hole, I hit a bad shot and took my club and started slamming it into the ground," Brady said.

"My dad marched me off the course and back to the car and said, 'If you ever do that again, I'm never bringing you here again. I'm never taking you to baseball again, you're never playing sports again'."

"Man, I was crying. After the baseball game, my dad said, 'We're going to go back and play golf again, and you're going to play it right'. I learnt a great lesson that day."

Those childhood lessons have served Brady through his college and professional career.

Two years ago, Brady's never-say-die mentality saw him haul the Patriots back from a 28-3 third-quarter deficit to win Super Bowl LI against the Atlanta Falcons, the biggest comeback in history.

By now, the story of Brady's emergence in the sport is part of NFL legend, ritually retold with each new Super Bowl appearance.

He was the 199th pick in the sixth round of the 2000 draft, but he worked his way up from fourth-choice quarterback before assuming the starter's jersey from the injured Drew Bledsoe.

That breakthrough season ended with his first Super Bowl win in 2002, and gave a glimpse of the player he would become.

His opposite number that day, former Rams quarterback Kurt Warner, said Brady's ability to deliver under pressure has become his calling card. "When the game's on the line, he plays his best football," Warner said. "For me, we're living in the era of the greatest quarterback in the game."

Brady, who has spoken of playing until he is 45, has no interest in engaging in discussion about his place in the pantheon of greats.

"What's important to me is playing my best game on Sunday," he said. "I'm not thinking about anything beyond this. Teams don't want an average quarterback. I've got to be better than that."

"They want a great quarterback. And that's what I'm trying to do this week," AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Atlanta, Georgia

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Capacity 75,324



Los Angeles Rams

National (NFC)

Sean McVay

3

1

2

▼ **Jared Goff**
Quarterback
Age: 24
3rd season in NFL

CONFERENCE	AMERICAN (AFC)
COACH	Bill Belichick
SUPER BOWLS	10
WINS	5 
LOSSES	5 
DIVISION PLAY-OFFS	41 - 28 Los Angeles Chargers
CONFERENCE FINAL	37 - 31 Kansas City Chiefs



New England Patriots

American (AFC)

Bill Belichick

10

5 

5 

▼ **Tom Brady**
Quarterback
Age: 41
9th Super Bowl

SOURCE AND PHOTOS: AFP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Fearless McVay takes on fearsome Belichick

ATLANTA • Two of the National Football League's (NFL) most respected minds will come head to head on the grandest of stages when the Los Angeles Rams' coaching prodigy Sean McVay meets New England Patriots counterpart Bill Belichick, a five-time Super Bowl champion widely considered to be the best NFL coach of all time.

McVay, who turned 33 last month, is the youngest head coach in the NFL and will be the youngest head coach ever in a Super Bowl.

Belichick, 66, is going for his sixth Super Bowl title with the New England Patriots since 2001. He will be trying to become the oldest head coach to win a Super Bowl.

The fresh-faced McVay has emerged as the hottest young coach in the league over the past two years, transforming the Rams from one of the worst teams in the

NFL to one of the most dynamic.

While the Patriots have been installed as favourites for this morning's (Singapore time) battle in Atlanta, few would be surprised if McVay pulls off an upset.

Appointed in early 2017, he made headlines as the youngest coach in the history of the modern NFL, taking over the Rams (who moved from St Louis in 2016) just two weeks shy of his 31st birthday.

A franchise which had suffered a disastrous 4-12 campaign in their first season back in Los Angeles were badly in need of a shake-up.

McVay duly delivered, transforming the team in the 2017 season and leading them into the play-offs.

One of his first tasks was to re-establish the trust between the players and the coaching staff.

"It was really just the way he portrayed things," quarterback Jared

Goff revealed. "The way he communicated. The way he made something that's so complicated seem so simple."

For McVay, the cornerstone of his coaching philosophy are human relationships.

"That's the foundation of everything we do," he said. "People want to feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves. It's not about figuring out who's right, it's figuring out what's right."

"Once you have the environment where people are comfortable feeling vulnerable, it opens up the lines of communication."

Belichick was in a relaxed mood on Saturday as the Patriots players were given a day off training to visit the venue for this morning's game with family and friends.

He said that there were no special plans for his eve-of-game team

talk. "Just us circling the wagons and playing for each other," he said.

"We are playing a good team, and we are going to have to play our best game of the year."

McVay revealed in the lead-up that Belichick had regularly sent him congratulatory text messages this season following wins.

And the veteran has nothing but admiration for the Rams' coach.

"I have a ton of respect for Sean," Belichick said.

"He's done a great job in the two years he's been with the Rams."

"They're good in every area. They're going to be very hard to beat."

McVay added: "Certainly, we respect the Patriots, but we're coming here with the expectation of winning a game."

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Sean McVay is the youngest head coach in a Super Bowl while Bill Belichick wants to be the oldest winner.

Talking points

BRADY'S DESTINY WITH HISTORY

For Tom Brady, a sixth Super Bowl title would give him more than any other player and, at 41, make him the oldest quarterback to win the championship, surpassing Peyton Manning, who was 39 when he led the Denver Broncos to victory over the Carolina Panthers three years ago.

OFFICIALS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

After an egregious missed call that would have put the New Orleans Saints in prime position to secure a trip to the Super Bowl at the expense of the Rams, the officials working the NFL's title game will do their best to stay out of the spotlight. The referee selected to lead the officiating crew for the Super Bowl is John Parry, a 54-year-old American who has worked at the championship game in 2012 (referee) and 2007 (side judge).

EXPERIENCE VERSUS YOUTH

The Patriots-Rams clash represents a match-up of experience versus youth and nowhere will it be more evident than at the all-important quarterback position. The age difference between the Patriots' Tom Brady (41) and Rams' Jared Goff (24) is the largest gap between opposing starting quarterbacks in Super Bowl history. REUTERS

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

CRICKET

2nd & final Test Australia v Sri Lanka: Day 4 (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 7.30am).

FOOTBALL

English Premier League West Ham v Liverpool (Singtel TV Ch102 & StarHub Ch227, tomorrow, 4am).

Spanish LaLiga Rayo Vallecano v Leganes (StarHub Ch213, tomorrow, 4am).

TOMORROW

CRICKET

2nd & final Test Australia v Sri Lanka: Day 5 (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 7.30am) – if needed.

FOOTBALL

AFC Champions League Prelim rd 1: Home United v Persija Jakarta (Jalan Besar, 7.30pm).
English FA Cup 4th rd, replay:

Newport v Middlesbrough (Singtel TV Ch111, Wednesday, 3.40am).

For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

life

D **CELEBRITY
OVERSTAYER**
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for 18 months
D6

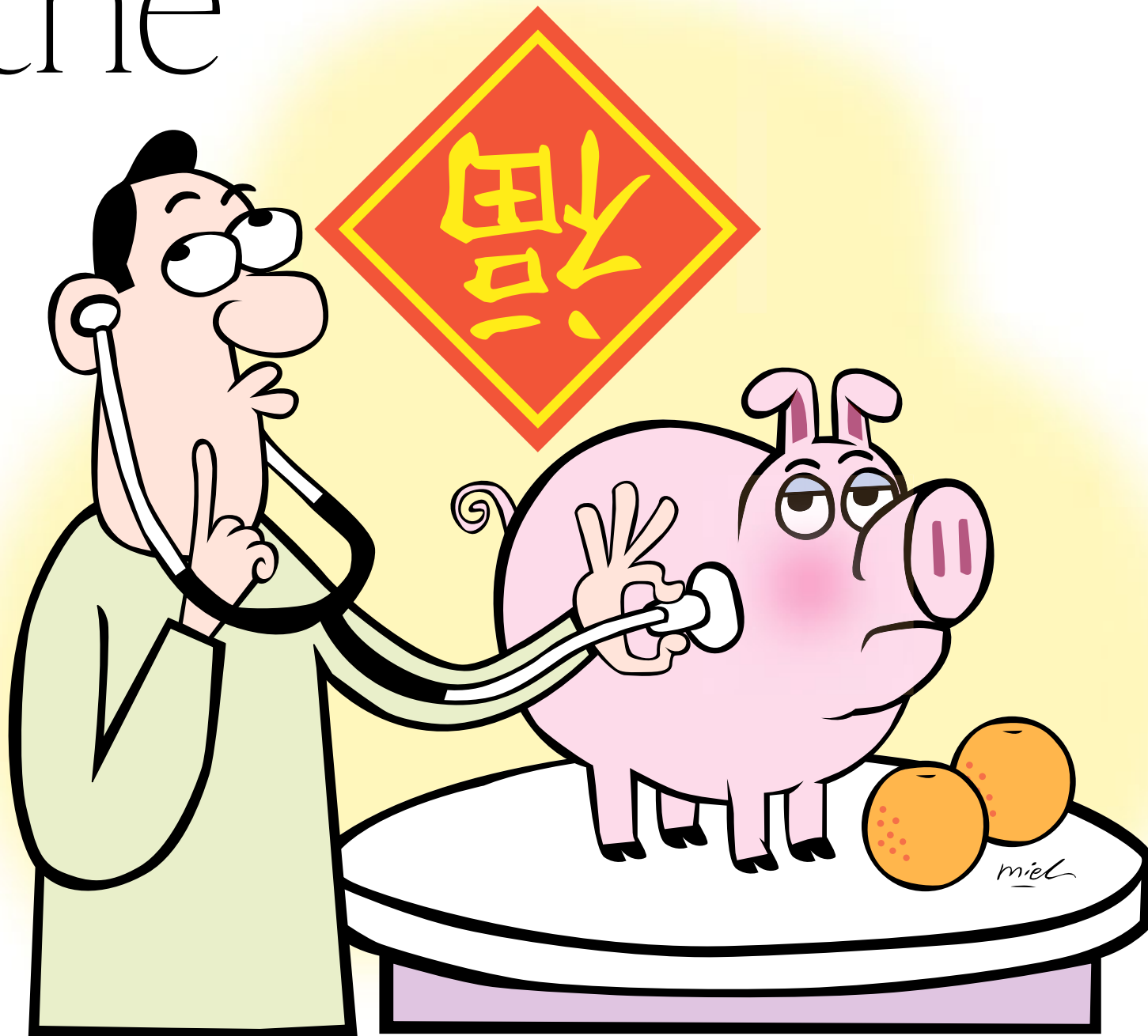


Yong Su Ru, 26, Female

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Start the Pig Year in the pink



Follow these tips to
begin the year on a
good note physically
and mentally



Joyce Teo

As many Singaporeans gather to celebrate Chinese New Year tomorrow, the focus is likely to be on indulging in good food and meeting relatives and friends.

Here are tips on how to make the most of the festive period in a healthy and meaningful way.

1

Dispense with small talk

Well, not entirely, but do not spend the whole Chinese New Year period making small talk with everyone at every gathering just for the sake of social courtesies.

Instead, connect at a deeper level with some of your relatives and friends.

"The idea is not about quantity, but quality," said Ms Andrea Chong, a senior psychologist at the Institute of Mental Health.

"It's to have quality conversations with relatives who matter to you, rather than superficial conversations with everybody you meet."

Connecting and having meaningful conversations will likely lead to better relationships, which you can build and count on throughout the year and in difficult times.

2

Be wary about making comparisons or probing for more information

At gatherings where there may be a number of people, conversations sometimes turn into comparisons.

For example, how many children couples have, how well their children are doing in school or how well someone is doing in his job.

It is best to avoid these comparisons as it may make people feel uncomfortable.

Also, avoid probing questions as you never know what someone is going through.

"Show respect when someone is not willing to say more. You can say, 'It's okay, I understand you don't want to talk about it' and then talk about something else," Ms Chong said.

3

Show concern when talking to the elderly

While you may be at a loss over what to say to an elderly relative at a gathering, the reality is that the topic does not matter.

"Anything goes, but just be genuine and avoid judging them or giving unsolicited advice based on your personal biases," Ms Chong said. "Do not assume you know better."

If an elderly person broaches a difficult topic such as death, show genuine concern and gently inquire more, she said.

"Understand what the issue is in a gentle manner. It could be health issues or loneliness or that no one bothers about him," she said.

For instance, he could say that he is waiting to die because no one cares about him.

4

Know and manage your stress

If you feel stressed during this period, you need to identify the triggers to manage the stress.

"If you're doing too much or have to cook a lot for many people, you'll need to set good boundaries. This means perhaps having to say no to some people."

If the stress is about money, stick to realistic budgets.

If the stress is originating from meeting family, find a way to politely decline meet-ups and see them less.

"It's not like you want to avoid them, but you want to limit the time spent with them. It's about moderation," said Ms Chong.

5

Do not overindulge

There is a tendency over this period to overdo most things – from eating to staying out all night. This could result in a number of unwanted health issues.

If you want to play mahjong or cards, for example, it may not be a good idea to pull an all-nighter.

The lack of sleep during this period can lead to low immunity, said Dr Kong Jing Wen, head of Honggang Polyclinic and a family physician and consultant at the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics.

When one's immunity is down, there is a higher chance of catching the common cold, the symptoms of which include sore throat, cough, running nose and fever.

During this period, there may also be significant changes in one's routine that can contribute to a mi-

graine, said Dr Jonathan Jia Yuan Ong, a consultant at National University Hospital's neurology division.

"These include changing sleep patterns (either too much or too little sleep), irregular eating times, insufficient hydration and excessive intake of alcohol."

Overindulging during meals will not only result in weight gain, but also increase the risk of gastroesophageal reflux, the symptoms of which include bloatedness, stomach discomfort and heartburn.

Heavy meals, especially those that are too oily or spicy, can result in reflux. Common food culprits include nian gao (sticky rice cake), bak kwa and alcoholic drinks, said Dr Kong.

"As these food items are not

usually eaten regularly, one may experience gastric discomfort when consuming these items in large amounts," he added.

Dr Ian Phoon, chairman of the cardiovascular disease workgroup committee at SingHealth Polyclinics, said unhealthy eating during the festive season continues to be a major health issue because the high sugar content in Chinese New Year goodies and drinks may cause a spike in blood sugar.

"Beware even if they are not sweet as there may be a lot of carbohydrates (starch) and fats in your food," he said.

Alcohol such as beer also has hidden carbohydrates. A can of beer may have 10g to 14g of carbohydrates, the equivalent of two to three teaspoons of sugar, he said.

6

Mend relationships

You may turn up at the same gathering as a friend or relative whom you do not have a good relationship with.

This might just be the year that you move on from whatever grudge or unhappiness you are holding on to.

Letting go of anger and resentment will lead to better mental well-being, said Ms Chong.

"Forgiveness is for oneself. The intention is not to make the other person feel better," she added.

To forgive is not to forget that something happened, though.

"It's not about forgetting, but acknowledging that it happened," she said.

joyceteo@sph.com.sg

Build muscles, build bonds

For men, exercising in a group can help them form friendships that combat loneliness

Scott Douglas

When Mr Brad Koenig divorced and moved from Toledo, Ohio, to Ormond Beach, Florida, in 2017, two of the first things he did were sign up for a yoga class and join a running club.

"The only people I knew in the area were my brother and sister-in-law," says the former truck driver, 50, who is now a full-time student.

"Finding people to work out with was essential to getting my life back on track."

Mr Koenig did with purpose what many men, including myself, have discovered more incidentally: Exercise can be a great way to form the types of friendships that combat loneliness.

The therapists and exercisers I interviewed for this article say group workouts tend to build stronger bonds than, for example, adjoining cubicles, while enriching men's lives by introducing them to a wider range of potential acquaintances.

Although loneliness is a condition that cannot be defined and tracked as precisely as diseases are, it appears to be a significant problem in the United States.

A survey by health service company Cigna of more than 20,000 Americans released last spring found that 46 per cent of respondents, who were 18 years and older, said they sometimes or always feel alone, and 27 per cent said they rarely or never felt understood by others.

A study by advocacy group AARP released in September concluded that one in three adults aged 45 or older are lonely.

Research has also found that loneliness is dangerous.

"Depression, anxiety, substance abuse – these are often related to loneliness," says Dr Laura Fredendall, a clinical psychologist in Terre Haute, Indiana.

And it can have a physical impact: Research on nearly half a million British people found that those who reported more loneliness had a



higher rate of heart attacks and death in the seven-year study period.

There is a distinction between being alone and lonely, according to Dr Fredendall.

Loneliness is marked by persistent isolation.

"It's feeling like you have no one to relate to, no friendships where you can confide in others," she says. "You can be in a romantic relationship and have 'work friends', but still be quite lonely."

Men might be especially susceptible, says Dr Mitchell Greene, a clinical and sport psychologist in Haverford, Pennsylvania.

In addition to the social media-induced isolation that can affect everyone, Dr Greene says, "men tend to have fewer friendships than women, and are less likely than women to make social invitations. Men's rela-

tionships tend to be more activity-based".

Enter exercise. Or more precisely, exercising with others.

"I have several male clients who I've encouraged to go to group workouts," Dr Greene says. "It's not that I'm telling them how to make friends. I'm steering them towards environments in which healthy social ties are more possible."

Or, as Dr Fredendall advises some of her lonely clients: "You need exercise anyway. Join a group or class instead of going to bars."

As a middle-aged man who works from home and has a history of depression, I know firsthand the wisdom of this advice.

Fifteen years ago, when I moved to Maine from Maryland, I began to purposefully seek out running companions. I was not as fast a runner as in my youth, but that led to a great benefit: a much larger pool of training partners, most of whom I would not have met otherwise.

In the past year, I have run with teens and 70-somethings and all ages between. I run with men and women, with a variety of marital and family situations. Our backgrounds and professions are similarly diverse.

Some are people I see only occasionally for a few friendly kilometres, while others have become confidantes. All enrich my life. At a

time when my sedentary contemporaries are more likely to see their worlds shrink, I have never had a larger, more eclectic social circle.

I have long believed that a few runs with someone build bonds more quickly than the same amount of time spent over coffee or lunch.

Mr Kevin Mejia, 26, a public relations professional from Queens, New York, has also noticed this phenomenon. "There's something special about working out together," he says. "Your guard is down. You talk about all sorts of things."

Dr Greene says this aspect of shared effort can significantly lower feelings of loneliness, even if the relationship never moves outside the gym.

"Just finding other people with similar stories and struggles can have a huge effect," he says.

How can you convert comrades in sweat into bosom buddies? After all, announcing "I'm here to make friends" might not go over well in a yoga class in which people are accustomed to a soft "namaste".

Some activities have a built-in mechanism for connecting with others.

On group runs, for example, I find that conversation flows with an ease I struggle to attain in my sedentary hours. Local running clubs and cycling and ski shops can point you to informal, welcoming gatherings

of like-minded people.

Mr Mejia has found new and, in one case, old friends at his local YMCA. "One of my gym buddies is someone I knew from a while back," he says. "We reconnected when it turned out we were often there working out at the same time."

He has also formed friendships through his Y's running club.

He acknowledges that indoor gym culture can present barriers to getting to know others.

"A lot of people are listening to music or there are groups of three to four that seem a little clique-y," he says. "I don't talk to everyone. But after a while, you start to see the same faces, you say hi, maybe you connect on social media. I'm a big fan of group classes for this reason."

Dr Greene has recommended CrossFit to several male clients.

"Many of them grew up playing team sports," he says. "Now that they're on their own, without that structure, they've sort of lost their way – they've stopped taking care of themselves and they're not making new friends."

"CrossFit gives them an element of social encouragement and friendly competition."

Mr Mejia sometimes hears tales of loneliness from inactive acquaintances. His universal counsel? "Find an activity you like, and find others doing it," he says. WASHINGTON POST

Men's relationships tend to be more activity-based, so consider sports such as group running. PHOTO: ST FILE

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Environment may influence diseases more than genetic codes

WASHINGTON • For years, public health experts have been arguing that where people live matters crucially to their health and life span, even though factors such as genetics or access to health insurance typically get more attention.

Health systems and governments have embarked on massive projects to decode people's DNA, in the hopes that the information will lead to a new era of tailored treatments and personalised prevention.

It is the next chapter in the nature-nurture debate: To keep people healthy, is it better to focus on people's postal codes or their genetic codes?

A new study in Nature Genetics examined 56,000 pairs of twins from a database of 45 million people insured through healthcare company Aetna to try to answer the question, and found – as might be expected – a mixed picture.

Of 560 diseases and conditions studied, 40 per cent had some genetic contribution, while a quarter were influenced by shared environment. Cognitive conditions such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder had the strongest genetic influence, while eye disorders and respiratory diseases such as sinusitis or hyperventilation were more influenced by the environment.

The relative influence of postal codes or genetic code "is incredibly nuanced. It depends on what disease you're interested in", said Dr Chirag Patel, a data scientist at Harvard Medical School who oversaw the

work that was led by Dr Chirag Lakhani, a post-doctoral researcher.

The study design was clever, constructing a massive twins study out of an insurance database, but it had a clear limitation – researchers did not have information on which twins were identical, sharing 100 per cent of their DNA, and which were fraternal, sharing only 50 per cent of their DNA. They had to infer which twins were identical by relying on a statistical method.

But their results were broadly in line with the findings of decades of twin studies, which typically examined the question of genes versus environment in individual diseases, although the new study found the diseases were a little less influenced by genes and a little more influenced by environment, on average.

The unsatisfying answer to the debate over whether genes or environment are more important may simply be that both matter, and the contributions of each will vary depending on the disease.

"It's nature via nurture; it's a clear interaction," said Professor Tim Spector, a professor of genetic epidemiology at King's College London who specialises in twin studies and was not involved in the work.

He said the large study would be a valuable contribution to American twin studies because of its size. But he pointed out that one interesting limitation – because of the structure of American health insurance – is that the twins studied were younger than 24 years old, since

they had to still be on their parents' insurance and insured for three years to be included in the database and identifiable as twins.

He noted that even though some diseases have strong genetic components, researchers have found that people with identical DNA often die at different ages and of different diseases. "That's what people need to realise – you have this overall genetic soup that predisposes you to things, but life will throw things at you that sometimes you can't measure, that will give a different end result."

On average across all the conditions the researchers examined, diseases were 31 per cent heritable and 9 per cent determined by the twins' shared environment. That leaves the majority of the difference unexplained, which could be individual differences between twins' experiences, randomness or data that is erroneous or incomplete.

Dr Melody Goodman, a biostatistician at New York University's College of Public Health, said the study was a great use of the data set, but because it represented a commercially insured population – who mostly received coverage through their employers – it was unlikely to fully capture one of the biggest determinants of health: poverty.

She said genetic tools would be valuable, but that many factors that influence people's health were already known. "Even if we can fix these genetic things, it won't take away the impact of poverty on people's health." WASHINGTON POST

DocTalk

Do coffee and hot beverages cause cancer?

WHO has removed coffee from its list of possible carcinogens, but has added hot beverages



Wong Seng Weng

During the book-signing ceremony for the launch of my new book *Cancer: A Doctor's View* at the end of last year, a reader asked me: "Does coffee increase the risk of cancer?"

For coffee lovers, 2018 has been an emotionally tumultuous year. In March, a Superior Court judge in Los Angeles in the United States passed a judgment that required all coffee sold in California to carry a cancer warning.

The trigger for such a judgment was the presence of a chemical called acrylamide in coffee beans.

Acrylamide, which is created during the coffee-roasting process, has been shown in laboratory experiments on mice to increase the risk of cancer.

In August, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) put forth a statement declaring its position that labelling coffee as potentially cancer-causing is unnecessary and misleading.

While conceding that a high dose

of acrylamide intake has been shown in experiments to increase the risk of cancer in laboratory animals, a similar effect has not been demonstrated in humans.

In any case, the FDA pointed out, acrylamide is present in a large variety of food since it forms whenever the sugar and amino acids occurring naturally in food are subjected to high-temperature cooking methods, such as roasting or deep-frying.

So, is coffee-drinking safe from an oncologist's point of view?

The concern of coffee increasing the risk of one getting cancer dates back to 1991, when the World Health Organisation (WHO) classified coffee as a possible carcinogen.

WHO highlighted clinical studies that indicated coffee-drinking may increase the risk of lung and bladder cancers.

Since then, many more clinical studies examining the link between coffee and cancer have shed more light on the issue.

As it turned out, the studies that associated coffee-drinking with lung and bladder cancers could have been confounded by higher exposure to cigarette smoke in coffee drinkers.

Many people seem to have a tendency to light up when they sit down with a cup of coffee to unwind.

Smoking has been scientifically

Current research supports the theory that frequent consumption of hot beverages (above 65 deg C) causes chronic heat-induced damage to the inner lining of the oesophagus and leads, over the long haul, to the development of oesophageal cancer... the next time you are ready to down a piping hot cup of your favourite brew, better to let it stand for a while.

established to be a major risk factor of lung and bladder cancers.

Curiously, more contemporary studies done on the link between coffee and cancer led to the pendulum swinging to the opposite end. They concluded that coffee had the effect of reducing the risk of cancer when it came to prostate, liver and colon cancers.

These developments, among others, led to the WHO's decision in 2016 to remove coffee from its list of "possible carcinogens".

This decision would have brought a sigh of relief to coffee lovers the world over. But controversies persist.

The total scientific explanation of the biologic basis for the beneficial effects of coffee, that is to say, if we even embrace the belief that coffee protects against cancer, is far from clear.

It seems that the elixir in coffee does not lie in caffeine, since studies have shown that decaffeinated coffee produces the same effect of lowering the risk of getting some cancers.

MYSTAND

Moderate consumption of coffee is probably safe. By moderate, I mean up to about four cups a day.

Putting aside the controversies surrounding coffee and cancer risk, we still need to bear in mind the effects of excessive caffeine.

Insomnia, irregular heartbeat,

high blood pressure and osteoporosis in women are but a few of the health issues potentially linked with excessive caffeine intake.

Here is the coda to the whole coffee saga. The cancer-causing effect of a hot cup of coffee may not even come from the possibly malignant roasted coffee beans.

When the WHO removed coffee from the list of possible carcinogens in 2016, another carcinogen took its place – hot beverages.

The cancer implicated this time is cancer of the oesophagus. The oesophagus is the food passage that links the throat to the stomach.

Current research supports the theory that frequent consumption of hot beverages (above 65 deg C) causes chronic heat-induced damage to the inner lining of the oesophagus and leads, over the long haul, to the development of oesophageal cancer.

So, the old wives' tale of the benefit of drinking your beverage while it is hot may not be good advice.

This is my advice – the next time you are ready to down a piping hot cup of your favourite brew, better to let it stand for a while.

sengweng.wong@smg.sg

• Dr Wong Seng Weng is the medical director and consultant medical oncologist at The Cancer Centre.



ST ILLUSTRATION: CEL GULAPA

AI beats expert doctors at finding cervical pre-cancers

TAMPA (Florida) • Artificial intelligence (AI) may be poised to wipe out cervical cancer, after a study showed computer algorithms can detect pre-cancerous lesions far better than trained experts or conventional screening tests.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cancer in women, with an estimated 570,000 new cases globally last year.

Despite major advances in screening and vaccination, which can prevent the spread of human papillomavirus, which causes most cases of cervical cancer, those gains have mainly benefited women in rich nations.

Some 266,000 women died of cervical cancer globally in 2012, 90 per cent of them in low- and middle-income nations, according to the WHO.

"Cervical cancer is now a disease of poverty, of low resources," said Dr Mark Schiffman, senior author of the study and a doctor at the National Cancer Institute's Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics near Washington, who has been searching for a cure for cervical cancer for 35 years.

"We are trying to find ways that are extremely cheap, extremely easy, but very accurate, so we can attack cervical cancer by vaccine and also a bit later through a simple technique that is cellphone-based or something like it," he said.

Dr Schiffman was part of a team that built an algorithm from an archive of more than 60,000 cervical images collected from Costa Rica.

The pictures were taken using just a speculum, small light and camera. No advanced imaging was required.

The study began in the 1990s,

involving more than 9,400 women who were followed for up to 18 years.

The AI technique, called automated visual evaluation, found pre-cancerous cells with 91 per cent accuracy, according to a report published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*. In comparison, a human expert review found 69 per cent of pre-cancers, while conventional laboratory tests such as Pap smears found 71 per cent.

Among women aged 25 to 49, who face the highest risk of cervical cancer, the AI algorithm was even more accurate, finding 97.7 per cent of pre-cancerous cells.

"It performed much better than humans looking at those same pictures. It certainly performed a lot better than me," Dr Schiffman said.

The goal is to roll out the technology in the next three to five years, enrolling more patients in clinical trials worldwide and even-

tually making it easily accessible everywhere.

Dr Schiffman said a deal has just been struck with a major philanthropic group to assist in the process.

The technology has not been patented on purpose, he added. The aim is to keep costs very low so that women most in need can benefit. "I think now we have a possible tool that can go anywhere and not sacrifice scientific quality, but actually offer a medically valid screen," he said.

Dr Jennifer Wu, an obstetrician-gynaecologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York who was not involved in the research, said the findings were "very exciting".

"This could really cut down on a lot of missed cases of cervical cancer and allow more patients access to diagnosis and treatment," she said. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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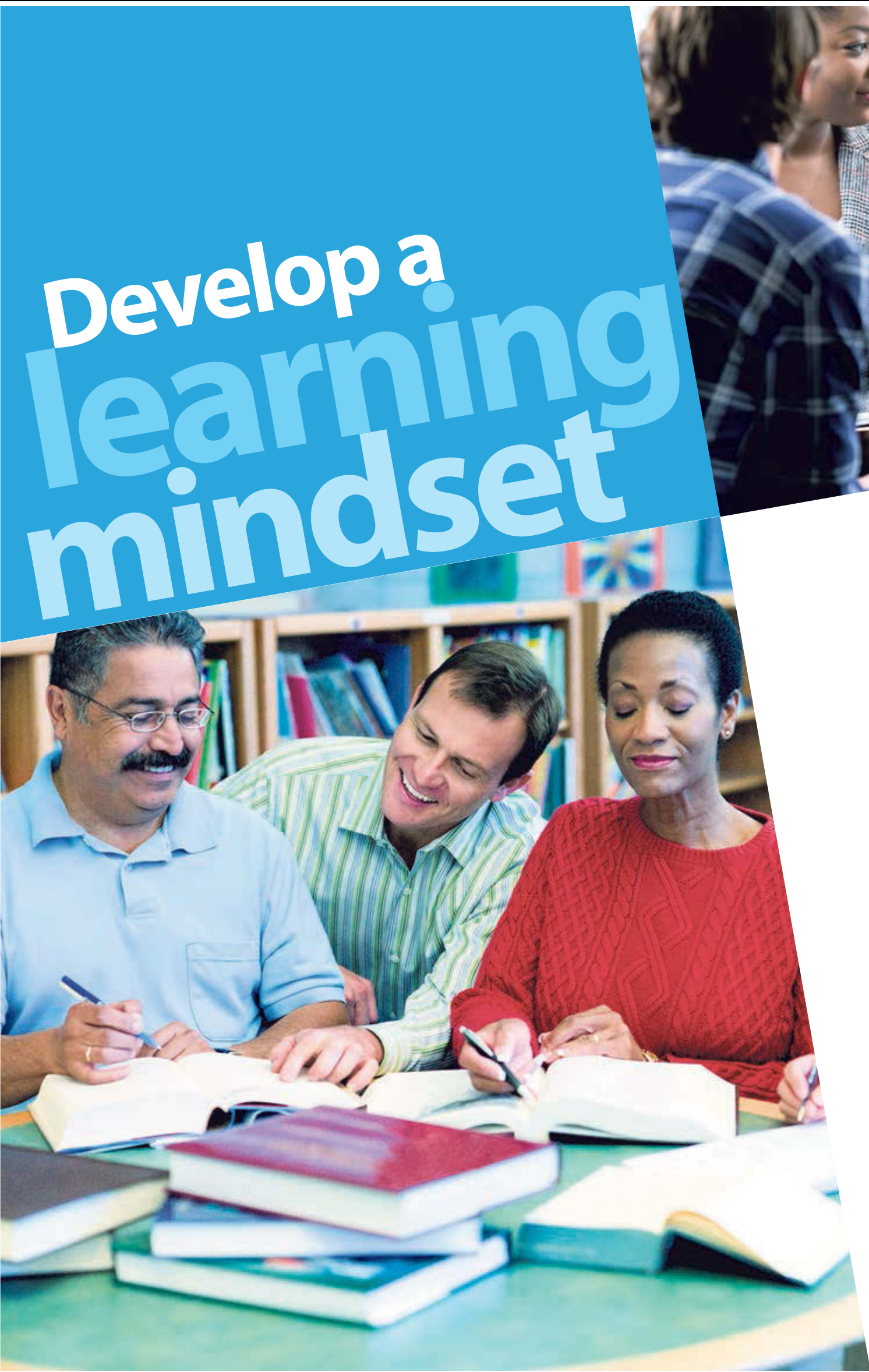
He will be joined by The Straits Times Senior Correspondent Lee Siew Hua.



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ARUL JOHN

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Connect different subjects to your own interests

If you have an interest in one thing, search for ways to connect it to other subjects or disciplines. If you can relate something new to something else you already love, your interests will expand.

Relate the knowledge to your own life

You will be more passionate about learning if you find a way in which what your learning connects to your own life.

Surround yourself with positive people

You are more likely to be interested in something if your friends are interested in the same thing, or encourage and support your interests.

Talk to people who share your interests

Other people who have interests similar to yours can reinforce and encourage your passion for learning.

Cultivate imagination

Being able to think creatively and imagine different stories or images about something can help you develop a passion for learning. Engaging the creative side of your brain gets you motivated to learn more.

Collaborate and expand your horizons

When you collaborate with someone else on a project, you can learn new ways of doing something. Working together and finding compromises expands your mind to new ideas and possibilities.

Increase difficulty gradually

Once you already know something, it can be boring to keep going over the same information. So build chances to learn more about the topic.

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We have no fixed plans, but it's time for her to take it easy... With a franchise, she can supervise or come to the shop on a part-time basis. Her presence will also lend credibility to the shop's branding. It's impossible to ask her to stop.



MR ALLAN TANG, youngest son of Madam Leong Yuet Meng, the 90-year-old hawker and founder of Nam Seng Noodles & Fried Rice

Nam Seng owner Leong Yuet Meng (left) is still working at age 90. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Franchisee wanted for noodle stall

Sons of the founder of Nam Seng Noodles & Fried Rice, which began in 1962, say it is time their mother take it easy

Eunice Quek
Food Correspondent

Madam Leong Yuet Meng, the 90-year-old hawker and founder of Nam Seng Noodles & Fried Rice at Far East Square, is looking to franchise her business, which is best known for its traditional wonton noodles.

There is no franchise fee set yet, as Madam Leong and her three sons believe in finding someone with the "right fit".

Her youngest son, Mr Allan Tang, 62, says: "We have no fixed plans, but it's time for her to take it easy. It's okay for her to continue to work, but not for so long. With a franchise, she can supervise or come to the shop on a part-time basis. Her presence will also lend credibility to the shop's branding. It's impossible to ask her to stop."

Indeed, the Cantonese-speaking Madam Leong is very much the driving force behind her brand, which started in 1962 at the old National Library canteen in Stamford Road.

Besides wonton noodles, the menu features venison hor fun, soya sauce chicken noodles, dumpling noodles, seafood hor fun and fried rice. Each dish costs \$5.

Madam Leong wakes up at 4am every day for prayers and house-keeping work, followed by a trip to the wet market to pick up fresh produce. Her second son Michael Tang, 65, whom she lives with in

Toa Payoh, then sends her to Nam Seng when it opens at 8am.

Four staff work with her in the kitchen, mainly to do the cooking and preparation of ingredients, while Madam Leong takes orders and collects money without missing a beat. The shop remains open until 6pm and even when there are no customers, Madam Leong sits at the shopfront to greet passers-by.

On Saturdays, she is done by 1pm, when she eagerly awaits her regular mahjong session with friends.

Her wizened face lights up at the mention of mahjong, which she credits for training her precise order-taking and sharp calculation skills.

Even after running the business for 57 years, the pride she takes in her food is admirable.

She scrutinises The Straits Times reporter slurping up the wonton noodles and says: "It's good, right? The wonton is the right size and you must have the chilli to go along."

Mr Michael Tang has tried to run Nam Seng's operations along with Madam Leong's eldest grandson Bryant, but they get frazzled sometimes.

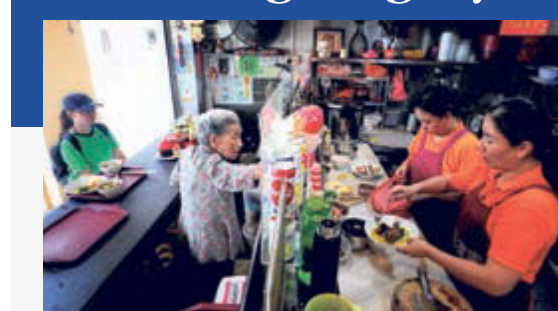
Mr Bryant Tang, 41, who works in a bank, says: "I can understand why she gets upset and can be grumpy with diners who have complicated orders. They ask for more noodles, less oil or less salt. It's not easy."

He recalls getting scolded by his grandmother for making oversized wontons last time, saying: "Her work ethic is very strong. It has always been her dream to feed people. I respect her so much, her resilience is amazing."

On her longevity when young hawkers do not last in the industry, Madam Leong says: "I have endurance and patience – that's why I can last for so long. Even if I have no customers, I stand here and get customers."

"I've spent more than 50 years to

Continuing Nam Seng's legacy



SCAN TO WATCH



<http://str.sg/namseng>

build the brand and can't bear to leave the business. I hope that whoever takes over does not lose the legacy of Nam Seng."

euniceq@sph.com.sg

• Nam Seng is at 01-01 Far East

Square, 25 China Street, and is opened from 8am to 6pm (weekdays), 8am to 1pm (Saturdays) and closed on Sundays. It is currently closed for Chinese New Year and resumes operations on Thursday. For more information on the franchise, call Mr Bryant Tang on 8552-6359.

Kitchen couture goes stylish

NEW YORK • Pastry chef Natasha Pickowicz's uniforms used to be a daily struggle.

She found that they were always too big for her – hulking jackets and oversized pants were the norm in many restaurants.

"Unisex sizing is a joke," Pickowicz said. "All of those clothes are tailored to fit men."

Not only did the clothes look sloppy, but they also interfered in the kitchen. "Your shirts are dropping into the work you are doing, your pants are dragging on the floor and you are tripping," she said.

Since becoming the standard in 19th-century France, the traditional chef outfit has been the formal and fussy ensemble known as chef's whites: long-sleeved, snug jackets with a double row of buttons down the front. Though technically anyone could be a chef, the outfits were originally designed for men.

But in recent years, many restaurant owners and chefs have embraced a new aesthetic in professional kitchens that is less hierarchical, more comfortable and inclusive of bodies of all shapes and genders. As the culinary world distances itself from a boys' club mentality – most recently because of the #MeToo movement – so have kitchen-wear companies like Hedley & Bennett, Tilit and PolkaPants, which design clothes that are both comfortable and stylish.

All three were founded by former cooks nearly six years ago to combat their growing frustrations with kitchen uniforms.

Both Hedley & Bennett, in Los

Angeles, and Tilit, in New York City, stock all their styles in separate sizing and cuts for men and women to accommodate a variety of figures.

"Offering a women's XS all the way up to a men's 4XL was a no-brainer for us," said Mr Alex McCrery, who founded Tilit with his wife Jenny Goodman.

Ms Ellen Bennett, founder of Hedley & Bennett, said she created products like her "Big" apron line to fit many body sizes.

At Cafe Altro Paradiso and Flora Bar in Manhattan, Pickowicz's solution was a baggy, white short-sleeve shirt with a row of buttons or snaps down the middle. Known as a dishwasher shirt, the uniform was once solely associated with people who did the dirty work in restaurants: cleaning, hauling and washing.

Danny Bowien, the influential chef of Mission Chinese Food in Manhattan and Brooklyn, started wearing dishwasher shirts in the kitchen a decade ago.

The exact origins of the classic chef's uniform are murky.

Dr Amy Trubek, a professor at the University of Vermont and author of Haute Cuisine: How The French Invented The Culinary Profession, said the outfits were white, like the uniforms of many other professions in the 1800s, because they represented "the 19th-century idea of purity, sanitation and cleanliness".

Even though the clothes – now typically made from stiff, sweaty polyester – were not the pinnacle of comfort or practicality, they remained the standard for nearly two centuries.



Founded by Ms Ellen Bennett, Hedley & Bennett in Los Angeles stocks colour aprons (above) as well as sizes to fit many body types. PHOTO: NYTIMES

But why did the shift away from formal, uncomfortable whites not occur, say, two decades ago?

Former cook and PolkaPants founder Maxine Thompson attributes it largely to the recent rise of the open kitchen.

Chefs are no longer hidden from the dining room, toiling away at their craft. In many restaurants, the back-of-house staff are almost as visible as the front-of-house staff, with some cooks even delivering dishes to tables themselves.

Ms Goodman said the role of the chef became more prominent, thanks to the rise of the chef-as-celebrity, Instagram and food television.

Ms Bennett had seen a "shift in mentality" in which people were realising the importance of the kitchen staff and that this pride translated to better uniforms.

Dr Trubek put it another way: "It's the end of French hegemony."

As more kitchens abandon the dynamics of their formal French forebears, it only makes sense that the uniform would follow suit.

For Pickowicz, the more casual outfits denote the end of the masculine environment that has long dominated the industry. "There are always going to be people who adhere to that tradition," she said. "But for me, it's heartening to see people beginning to deviate from it." NYTIMES

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When a pop star moves into your attic

Singer Harry Styles' stay at the home of producer Ben Winston and his wife inspired a sitcom, *Happy Together*

Alison de Souza
In Los Angeles

Imagine if pop idol Harry Styles suddenly moved in with you and your family.

This is what happened to producer Ben Winston and his wife Meredith, who secretly let Styles, a friend, crash in their attic at the peak of the latter's stardom with the boyband One Direction (2010 to 2016).

Styles was originally supposed to stay for only two weeks while work was being done on a house he had just bought.

But he ended up staying for 18 months and became like part of the family, Winston says.

He and Styles have now co-produced a sitcom loosely based on that experience, *Happy Together*, which airs on Mondays at 9pm on Fox Life (Singtel TV Channel 301 and StarHub TV Channel 501) and streams on FOX+.

At a press event in Beverly Hills in September last year, Winston spoke to *The Straits Times* about the show, which has Styles look-alike Felix Mallard playing Cooper James, a young singer and teenage heart-throb.

Escaping a messy break-up with his girlfriend and sick of celebrity life, he seeks refuge in the suburban home of his accountant Jake, played by Damon Wayans Jr, and Jake's wife Claire (Amber Stevens West).

Winston, the 37-year-old British television producer behind *The Late Late Show* with James Corden and the latter's popular *Carpool Karaoke* segment, explains why he and his wife agreed to let Styles stay with them.

The singer, who is 25 now and 12 years their junior, slept on a small mattress in their attic.

At the time, Winston was directing a lot of One Direction music videos and doing a lot of work with them, he explains.

"So I knew the boys very well and he needed a place to stay because he'd bought a house and it wasn't ready to move into yet.

"And the truth of it is that when



Harry asked to move in, we did only think it would be two weeks," says Winston, who also directed the 2011 movie documentary *One Direction: A Year In The Making*.

"My wife said to me, 'Look, it's fine. It's a bit weird, but it's fine.'"

"And then I guess he just became part of the furniture, really. He was a wonderful house guest so he ended up staying a little bit longer. Eighteen months later, he moved out and we really missed him when he did."

The show's comical storylines – which see Cooper shaking up Jake and Claire's staid married life – are largely fictional though.

"I'd love to say a lot of it is real because then my life would be a lot more funny and exciting," Winston says.

But what the sitcom does accurately capture is why Styles decided

He was a wonderful house guest so he ended up staying a little bit longer. Eighteen months later, he moved out and we really missed him when he did.



BEN WINSTON on Harry Styles

to stay with the Winstons for a longer time.

"I think he really loved the fact that he was living a very abnormal life at the time and we gave him a grounding of normality. Because his family lived four hours outside of London, I think we gave him that stability and normality that he really wanted.

"So in that respect there is some truth in our show, in that Cooper as a character really loves the normality of the life that Jake and Claire live.

"But as for stuff that happens or individual things that happen in their lives, it's all in the minds of (creators) Tim (McAuliffe) and Austen (Earl), who have created great scenarios that could happen potentially if a pop star was living in your attic."

Mallard, the 20-year-old Australian actor who plays Cooper,

says Styles took a hands-off approach in letting him and the show's writers create the character.

"What's great about the show is it's loosely inspired by that time, but that's where all the reality ends and we can create our own character. (Styles) talked to us about what the show's like and what it's inspired by, but we have control of who Cooper is and can develop him into his own person.

"It really is just the scenario of a pop star living in an ordinary environment and the rest of it is just sitcom," says Mallard, who appeared on the Australian soap opera *Neighbours* from 2014 to 2018.

"Finding the funniness in that situation, it's quite a fun opportunity to be able to bring that together."

stlife@sph.com.sg

Felix Mallard, Amber Stevens West and Damon Wayans Jr star in *Happy Together*. PHOTO: CBS TELEVISION STUDIOS

• *Happy Together* airs on Mondays at 9pm on Fox Life (Singtel TV Channel 301 and StarHub TV Channel 501) and streams on FOX+.

Hip-hop turns 40 and its 'parents' are beaming with pride

WASHINGTON • Forty years ago, hip-hop was little known outside its birthplace, New York, until the Sugarhill Gang decided to record their rhymes, launching the genre's rise as a dominant cultural and commercial force.

The result was the group's 1979 smash *Rapper's Delight*, which is credited as the commercial start of an unforgettable era in music.

Once an underground style centred on live performance in New York's Bronx borough, rap and hip-hop are the most influential styles in contemporary music today.

To mark hip-hop's big anniversary, a pop-up museum has been established in the American capital through the middle of this month.

"I never thought it would reach those proportions," said Grandmaster Caz, an icon of early hip-hop who wrote parts of *Rapper's Delight*. "Back in the day, we were discouraged from doing hip-hop – nobody respected it."

But the track found runaway success, becoming a global sensation and selling millions of copies.

In 2011, *Rapper's Delight* was even added to the prestigious National Registry at the Library of Congress – a nod to its role in ushering in a brand new genre.

"Putting it on record was the smartest thing that could happen to hip-hop," one of the three Sugarhill

rappers, Master Gee, told *Agence France-Presse* at the opening night of the museum, which boasts more than 500 pieces of autographed memorabilia.

"Commercially we are the first of our kind," Master Gee said. "We landed on the moon, if you will."

At the beginning, making music was not necessarily Master Gee's end goal.

"I just wanted to get a date," he said.

The rap pioneer, now 57, was then in his last year of high school and performed at neighbourhood parties.

"All the lyrics I wrote were in the effort for people to know which one I was out of the three" in the band, he said.

In those days, hip-hop was a fledgling cultural movement that revolved around four elements: dance, graffiti, vocals – known as "MCing" – and controlling the turntables, or "DJing."

The MCs – short for "masters of ceremony" – were primarily on stage to support the DJs. But they ultimately became the true stars of the genre.

Hip-hop took some musical cues from disco and funk: *Rapper's Delight* features the famous bassline of *Good Times* by the band Chic, which was later sampled in 1980 by rock band Queen in *Another One*



Grandmaster Caz looking at memorabilia at the Hip-Hop Museum Pop-Up Experience in Washington, DC. He wrote parts of *Rapper's Delight*, which is credited as the commercial start of hip-hop. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Bites The Dust.

Early rap and hip-hop were focused on the principles of "peace, love, unity and having fun" – a cocktail that blended a festive atmosphere with a medium used by black people to express themselves.

"It's a release; it's self-expression," said Grandmaster Caz, who at 57 still proudly wears his blingy chains. "It was a fun and new way to express yourself."

At the opening of the museum in Washington, Grandmaster Caz and the Sugarhill Gang performed an old-school concert with another hip-hop trailblazer, Melle Mel.

Part of the pioneering group Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Mel co-wrote another cornerstone of the genre: *The Message*.

Released in 1982, it was the first

recorded rap song to describe life in the ghettos, addressing socio-economic issues like poverty.

Taking on social ills became signature to rap – a musical revolution that, like hip-hop's rise to commercial fame, happened at first by accident.

Mel said he was just trying to "do something different, to write outside the box from the basics of hip-hop rhymes – when you rap about how good you can rap or about a girl."

"I was just trying to change my style and write a different concept," he said.

Today, Mel considers the song "the most important hip-hop record ever made", but at the time of its release, it was hardly a hit.

"Nobody really believed in the

record," he said. "I didn't think it was going to be popular or a commercial success because it was serious."

But the record proved to be a sensation and in 2007, the group became the first rap artists inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the pantheon of popular American music.

"It put our group and hip-hop music on the level I thought it should be on, with all the other great genres," Mel said.

And though today's hip-hop is markedly different from what came out in those nascent days, its "parents" are optimistic about its future.

"You can't stop what can't be stopped and you can't kill what can't be killed," Master Gee said with a grin. "And that's hip-hop."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Murasaki Penguin's Anna Kuroda (centre) and David Kirkpatrick (left), and curator Ong Kian Peng (right), with the installation Motion Theory. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

High-tech creations on a shoestring budget

An exhibition titled Adaptations aims to show that one does not need a lot of money to marry art and technology

Toh Wen Li

Technology can be a medium for the creation of art and one does not need a big budget for that.

That is the premise of an ongoing group exhibition at Gillman Barracks.

From a two-player video game to an installation in which visitors can “compose” music by walking down an aisle flanked by speakers, the works at the show explore the intersection between art and technology.

The show at the arts enclave off Alexandra Road, titled Adaptations, features works by 11 artists. It runs till Saturday.

Curator Ong Kian Peng, 37, co-founder of independent art space Supernormal, says: “We are looking at how contemporary artists who didn’t start by using technology are bringing technology into their works.

“(There is a) shift from a completely non-technology practice to adapting and adopting technology in their work,” adds Ong, who is also an adjunct lecturer at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.

One of the installations, called Particulate, features mechanically controlled blinds programmed to open and shut at timed intervals.

Then, there is Motion Theory, a computer-programmed kinetic sculpture inspired by the idea of a hyperboloid and the movement of a dancer’s neck, wrist and ankles. A hyperboloid is a solid or surface having plane sections that are hyperbolas, ellipses or circles.

The abstract, shape-shifting structure – in which rows of elastic blue ribbons stretched across a frame are twisted in different directions – was conceived by Murasaki Penguin in collaboration with Ong.

The former is an Australian-based group comprising dancer-choreographer Anna Kuroda and sound and multimedia artist David Kirkpatrick.

Also on display is a lunar-inspired work called Sound Waves Of Empty Seas by 29-year-old visual artist Melissa Tan, who worked on it with Ong.

It comprises three slow-rotating metal discs whose surfaces have been laser-cut to evoke the cratered surface of the moon.

As the discs, which resemble vinyl records, rotate, their laser-cut indentations take turns to interlock with a music “comb” – the sort used in music boxes – resulting in the occasional musical note.

Art technician Jodi Cheung, 30, is presenting a two-player video game called Adventures Of Fortune: Run Cat Run – a playful take on the idea of team-building.

Visitors – two at a time – sit under an umbrella and push buttons that control the video-game characters that are projected in front of them.

During the course of the game, uncooperative behaviour will cause the umbrella to start closing.

Ong says with the exhibition, he is “trying to establish the fact that technology can be a poetic medium”.

“Technology (in art) is not something that is limited to high-budget productions in which you have to hire scientists or engineers.

“It could be something anybody is working on.”

tohwenli@sph.com.sg

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Poetic pairings on the migrant experience



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Olivia Ho

This unusual anthology takes Singapore’s burgeoning migrant worker poetry scene a step further by pairing works by more than 30 migrants, the bulk of them low-wage transient workers, with poems written in response by locals.

As is often the case in such broad exercises, the quality of the writing varies from page to page. There are brilliant pieces and there are pieces either so abstruse as to be impenetrable or simply short on literary quality.

Standouts include Singaporean Theophilus Kwek’s *The Way Light Works* and Bangladeshi Md Riazul Islam Riaz’s *Dead Body Of An Expatriate*, which are not paired in the book but seem naturally matched.

The former paints a scene of startling beauty shot through with orange, the colour of bus-stop tiles, persimmons and safety vests, that gives way to the distress of witnessing a co-worker’s accident.

The latter is stark and restrained, dwelling not on the horror of the speaker’s possible death, but the matter of forgiving him for it. “It was my great hope/That I may die in my mother’s lap,” he writes. “If there is not enough money/to send off my body,/Keep me in your prayer,/That I may be happy in Hereafter.”

The pairings work best when the poems respond sensitively to one another at oblique angles.

Singapore Writers Festival director Pooja Nansi takes Filipina Rea Maac’s *Scarecrow* and blacks out words from it in a visual representation of society’s erasure of the foreign domestic worker.

Bikas Nath recalls the books that filled his bag in school in Bangladesh and laments how, as a worker in a foreign land, his bag no longer has a place for books. In contrast, Ann Ang writes of Singapore: “Our nation is a book/but we have no time to read”.

The anthology does its best to present both sets of poets as equals, without condescending to the fact that one set is writing from a less regarded, more vulnerable position in society. At times, it even plays on such expectations, as in Rolinda Onates Espanola’s rhyming poem *She Maybe*.

Espanola, who is Filipina, appears at first to be committing a grammatical error by mixing up “may be” and “maybe” (“She maybe the maid with broken English”).

But the angry, insistent repetition of the error makes it deliberate, an indictment of the easy assumptions employers make about domestic helpers.

It would be easy to paint this anthology as an exercise in inclusivity, but that would be to miss its point.

It is an exercise founded on labels that nevertheless seeks to deconstruct and, ultimately, demolish them.

If you liked this, read: *Songs From A Distance* (2017, \$26.75, Books Kinokuniya), an anthology of 31 poems by migrant workers based in Singapore.

Follow Olivia Ho on Instagram at @ohomatopoeia

Spotlight on i Light Singapore



Life reporters (from far left) Anjali Raguraman, Toh Wen Li and Melissa Sim tell listeners about i Light Singapore and musician Craig David.

PHOTO: THE STRAITS TIMES

Tune in to ST podcast Life Picks, in which Life reporters highlight the best films, concerts, restaurants and arts events.

This week, Life reporters Anjali Raguraman and Toh Wen Li chat with host Melissa Sim about some of the exciting works from i Light Singapore, which runs till

Feb 24, and singer Craig David, who will spin and sing at Zouk on Feb 14.

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NOTICES

His 1,300 stamps with pig designs are worth \$11k



Stamp collector Johnny Lewis collects all the designs inspired by the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac

Michelle Ng

Mr Johnny Lewis' bathroom reading material is a little out of the ordinary. Some might even consider it strange.

Instead of a book or the newspapers, the 69-year-old flips through large plastic folders containing stamps he has collected as he goes about his business in the toilet.

The stamp collector of almost five decades has close to 700,000 stamps, a number which he says has been "downsized drastically". At one point, he had almost a million stamps.

"I have so many stamps so I just give them away or mail them to friends and schools in other countries. I keep only the ones I really like," says the Indonesia-born Mr Lewis, who became a Singapore citizen in 1988.

His folders are meticulously categorised by themes – for example, birds, flowers and even dance and theatre – and each stamp

comes with a small write-up of its issue date and country, history and design.

In particular, Mr Lewis, who used to work as a design consultant and now takes on freelance graphic design jobs, likes to collect Chinese zodiac stamps. He has been collecting them since 2004.

And since the Year of the Pig is up next, The Straits Times asks him how many stamps with pig designs he has.

He has 1,300 stamps with an estimated worth of more than \$11,000, which he says he keeps in four albums. Three albums are on loan to the Shenzhen Book Centre in China for an exhibition during the Chinese New Year period.

The most expensive of these is a colourful set of five stamps from China that was issued during the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976). He bought the set from auction website eBay for US\$100 (S\$135) three months ago and estimates its current market value to be \$200 to \$250.

So which of his pig-themed stamps does he find the most fascinating?

The one from Liechtenstein, a small country that lies between Austria and Switzerland, he says. The sheet of four red stamps featuring a pig motif was cut using a traditional Chinese paper-cutting technique. He had bought them at a

stamp exhibition in Bandung, Indonesia, for \$15.

Every year around October, he starts to work on expanding his collection of stamps featuring the zodiac animal for the upcoming Chinese New Year.

He scours eBay to find interesting stamps with the animal and gets his overseas collector friends to mail their countries' stamps to him the day they are issued.

When zodiac stamps were first issued in the 1970s, only a handful of Asian countries such as China and Japan were printing them. Today, around 60 countries issue these stamps.

Mr Lewis collects all the designs inspired by the 12 Chinese zodiac animals, but sold his entire collection featuring horses in 2014, which was the Year of the Horse. He says a businessman born in the Year of the Horse paid \$13,000 for more than 1,000 pieces.

"I am happy to sell if someone offers me the right price. With the money, I can easily restart the collection," he says.

Next up, he is turning his focus to stamps with car designs, including those that chart the invention of the automobile in 1885 to the ones that feature unreleased car models in 2020.

He has around 1,000 stamps with car-related designs.

He adds that he has been invited

to showcase his car-themed stamp collection at the 2019 Malaysia Autoshow in April.

His interest in stamps started when he was a 20-year-old graphic design student at Leicester Polytechnic – now De Montfort University – in England. He became a serious collector when he was 25.

His favourite is the Penny Black, which is among the world's first postage stamps, featuring the portrait of the late Queen Victoria, issued on May 6, 1840, during her reign.

He paid \$500 for a postmarked Penny Black stuck on a letter mailed on May 13, 1840, which he still owns today.

Most of his stamps, about 600,000 of them, are kept in 10 cardboard boxes in a storage rental space in Jurong and more than a thousand of his most valuable pieces are stored in a bank safe.

He estimates he has spent \$20,000 to \$30,000 on his hobby, but says his wife of 34 years does not know. The 64-year-old runs a beauty salon and the couple have a 29-year-old daughter who works in the shipping industry.

"If my wife finds out I spent \$500 on one stamp, she'll be very angry. So I don't plan to tell her yet," he says cheekily.

ngmich@sph.com.sg

An evening of joyful Bach music

REVIEW/CONCERT

MASAAKI SUZUKI & J.S. BACH

Yong Siew Toh

Conservatory Orchestra/
Conservatory Concert Hall/
Last Saturday

Chang Tou Liang

The baroque music revolution in Singapore is well and truly under way. Recent concerts by Red Dot Baroque and re:Sound have established a definite trend.

Another all-Bach concert with the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory Orchestra conducted by renowned baroque specialist Masaaki Suzuki, founder of Bach Collegium Japan, was the icing on a well-baked cake.

Instrumental concertos, choral music, a motet and a cantata were on this well-conceived programme.

Opening was Keyboard Concerto In D Minor (BWV.1052), Bach's longest, with young harpsichordist Mervyn Lee helming the demanding solo. His was a confident reading, weaving between being an ensemble member and exerting himself in solo passages.

The string accompaniment led by guest concertmaster Ryo Terakado, numbering only 12 players, ensured a light and transparent texture throughout. Thus Lee's ornate figurations in the slow movement and the finale's virtuosic flourishes came through very well.

The other concertante work was the Concerto In C Minor For Violin And Oboe (BWV.1060a), where Terakado and guest oboist Masamitsu San'nomiya, both permanent members of the Bach Collegium Japan and highly experienced soloists, held sway. The interplay between both players, intricate and intimate, was excellent.

Both choral works performed were sacred in inspiration and content. The religious message in the motet Jesu, Meine Freud (Jesus, My Joy, BWV.227) was unmistakable. The 16-member chorus from the conservatory, with four singers a part including tenor Alan Bennett (head of voice studies), sung like they meant every word.

Chorales were delivered with conviction, while the fugue Ihr Aber Seid Night Fleischlich (But Ye Are Not In The Flesh) delighted in its busy counterpoint.

In the brief trios Denn Das Gesetz Des Geistes (For The Spirit Of The Law) and So Aber Christus In Euch Ist (And Of Christ Be In You), the soloists were somewhat exposed, but did the best to hold their own.

In the cantata Mit Fried Und Freude Ich Fahr Dahin (With Peace And Joy I Depart, BWV.125), the feeling of accomplishment was even greater. The obligato parts from oboist San'nomiya and guest flautist Liliko Maeda were a delight, while a trio of young vocalists had the opportunity to shine.

Alto Lu Pei-Yun radiated true gravitas in the aria Ich Will Auch Mit Gebrochen Augen (Even With Broken Eyes), a prayer of submission, while baritone Lim Jing Jie reaffirmed that one need not fear death in O Wunder, Dass Ein Herz (How Wondrous That A Heart). In the duet Ein Unbegreiflich Licht (An Unfathomable Light), Lim and tenor Jong Woo were well matched in their utterance that "He who believes shall be blessed".

The final chorus Er Ist Das Heil (He Is The Salvation) came all too soon, but Suzuki and his charges totally justified the cantata's exhortation, sending an appreciative audience home in peace and joy.

Great display of physical energy

REVIEW/CONCERT

HONG KONG STRING ORCHESTRA

XIN LI WEI

Yong Siew Toh Conservatory
Concert Hall / Last Friday

Marc Rochester

Although it was founded over five years ago and has already toured the United States and China, the Hong Kong String Orchestra's members made their first official visit to Singapore only last week.

Their visit culminated in a concert given by five of their string players – violinists Samuel Au and Yao

Jue (who is also the orchestra's artistic director), violists Benjamin Wong and Caleb Wong, and cellist Pun Chak-Yin.

They brought a souvenir of Hong Kong with them in the form of Pong Law's arrangement of the theme music from the popular long-running RTHK TV series, Below The Lion Rock.

At one stage, the theme song had become so hugely popular that some were describing it as Hong Kong's unofficial anthem. It is a sweet, inconsequential piece and this arrangement neither added to nor took away anything from the original.

However, it hardly stretched the

players and certainly not in stamina as it lasted only a couple of minutes.

The players were able to show off a little bit more in six of Zhou Long's arrangements of Chinese Folk Songs.

There were lots of good string effects here and, with the communal shouts from the non-playing members of the orchestra sitting in the audience, it was all a lot of fun.

But the rather acidic and thin tone the players produced created something of a barrier which prevented the essential charm of these very fine arrangements from coming across in this performance.

For the Mendelssohn Octet, the Hong Kong musicians were

supplemented by two Singapore-based string players – violinist Oleksandr Korniev and cellist Qin Li Wei – as well as Chinese violinist He Shucong, familiar to many in the audience from his performances at previous Singapore Violin Competitions.

Unfortunately, the extra players did nothing to enhance the charmless sound of the string ensemble or bring any real sense of musical order to the proceedings.

Despite a lot of obvious enthusiasm, discretion triumphed when the performance stopped after the first movement – one felt that this great work was never going to survive its full course unscathed.

Returning after the interval with six players, the very limited dynamic range which had been noticeable in the first half disappeared altogether.

Through all four movements of Tchaikovsky's Souvenir De Florence, the total absence of any colour only emphasised a pervasive sense that this performance was holding itself together only by the skin of its teeth.

But what it lacked in detail, clarity, expressiveness and cohesion, it more than made up for in the obvious physical energy expended by the players. It was not a great musical treat, but it was a triumph of enthusiasm over discretion.

Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Films & Stars (PG) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (V)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Body And Soul 6 (IE)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)
4.30 Survivor 36 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
7.00 Holiday Eve Movie: Babe (PG) (M)
9.00 News 5
9.30 Hands That Shaped The Nation: The Merdeka Generation (IE)
10.00 Holiday Eve Movie: Gods Of Egypt (PG13) (M) (Premiere)
AM
12.30 Holiday Eve Special: Imagine: John Lennon's 75th Birthday Concert (PG) (V)
2.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
3.20 Radio 1's Big Weekend 2017 (PG) (V)
5.30 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (PG) (V)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 3-Plus-13 (V)
7.00 Tuesday Report – The Dream Catchers (CC) (IE)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Food And Beverage Investigators 8 (IE)

10.30 Night Market Life Aka. Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Body SOS 7 (PG) (CC) (V)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 iWalker Chinese New Year Special 2018 (IE)
2.30 Genius Go Go Go 2018: Chinese New Year Special (V)
4.30 Chinese New Year Eve Movie: Cook Up A Storm (PG) (CC) (M)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Chinese New Year Eve Movie: Kung Fu Yoga (PG) (CC) (M)
10.00 News Tonight
10.30 Chinese New Year Eve Special 2019 (V)
AM
12.30 Chinese New Year Eve Movie: Police Story 2013 (PG13) (CC) (M)
2.30 Chinese New Year Eve Movie: Huat Ah! Huat Ah! Huat! (PG) (CC) (M)
4.30 Food And Beverage Investigators: Chinese New Year Special (IE)
5.30 Spicy Hot (IE)

CHANNEL U

PM
1.00 Jiangsu Countdown Concert 2018 (V)
5.30 2019 New Year Global Gala (CC) (V)
9.00 Chinese New Year Eve Movie: The Bodyguard (PG) (CC) (M)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Chinese New Year Eve Movie: See You Tomorrow (PG13) (CC) (M)
AM
2.00 Big Food (IE)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
6.30 Money Mind
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Singapore On Film
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Singapore On Film
2.00 News Now
4.02 Every Woman

4.30 Made In Singapore
5.00 News Now
7.02 Singapore On Film (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Undercover Asia 6 (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Singapore On Film
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Money Mind
1.02 Undercover Asia 6
2.00 News Now
2.30 The Making Of Singapore On Film
3.02 Every Woman
4.00 News Now
4.30 The Making Of Singapore On Film
5.02 Undercover Asia 6
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Aasai Aasaiya – Cooking For Love (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Thedal – Star Search 2016 (V)
5.30 Mighty Raju Animation Series (S)
6.00 Raama Seetha (PG) (D)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru (CC) (Cul)
7.30 Mella Thiranthatu Katavu 3 (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Sa Re Ga Mae 2018 (V)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Ms V Supreme 2019 (CC) (V)
10.00 Ratsasan (PG13) (M)
AM
1.00 Tamil Seithi (News) (Encore)
1.30 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Dora The Explorer Specials – Fairytale Adventure (P)
10.00 Alpha And Omega: The Great Wolf Games (S)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (HD) (IE)

1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Tip The Mouse (P)
2.00 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (S)
6.00 OddBods (HD) (S)
6.30 Basic Mini-tary Training (S)
7.00 Rufus 2 (CC) (M)
8.00 Minuscule (HD) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 BWF Grand Prix – German Open 2018 (Sports)
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 BoBoiBoy Galaxy (HD) (S)
6.30 Apa Rasa? (IE)
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Dansa Mania (CC) (V) (Debut)
9.30 Mak Cun 4 (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Tenggelmnya Kapal Van Der Wijck (PG) (CC) (M)
AM
1.00 Berita (HD) (News) (R)
1.30 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 – April 19)
You like to blaze trails and should be able to see a great plan come to fruition.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)
You are feeling caught in the middle of something big. Do not worry about whether you are in the right.

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)
You should find it easier to change other people's minds – you can win any argument.

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)
Your finances are on the line, so do something about it.

Leo (July 23 – Aug 22)
You may be able to look around the corner and spot good solutions to upcoming problems.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)
Every now and then, you need to reorganise to see if things could be done better.

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)
Your aura of positive energy makes everyone feel warm and fuzzy inside.

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
Your domestic situation needs a change. A simple redecoration should be enough to keep you happy.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)
Your social energy is much more relaxed and good at making others feel welcome and comfy.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)
Your energy is great for making small changes and taking small steps.

Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)
Do not worry about whether everyone is listening to you – your mental energy attracts them.

Pisces (Feb 19 – March 20)
This is not the best time for tackling tests or paperwork – you have too much on your mind.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Middy With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.17am/7.21pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 6.41am/7pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 12.01am (2.7m), 5.01am (1.6m), 10.50am (2.9m), 5.24pm (0.6m). Desaru: 5am (1.9m), 9.50am (2.5m), 4.45pm (0.8m). Port Dickson: 12.53am (0.3m), 6.44am (2.4m), 1.42pm (0.6m), 7.16pm (2.3m). Mersing: 5.14am (2m), 9.15am (2.4m), 4.07pm (1m), 11.23pm (3.1m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 12.26am (2.7m), 5.30am (1.5m), 11.22am (3m), 5.56pm (0.5m). Desaru: 12.07am (2.7m), 5.28am (1.8m), 10.31am (2.5m), 5.16pm (0.8m). Port Dickson: 1.28am (0.2m), 7.12am (2.5m), 2.08pm (0.5m), 7.46pm (2.4m). Mersing: 5.39am (1.9m), 10.04am (2.4m), 4.44pm (0.9m), 11.52pm (3.2m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
9.30 The Untold Story Of The 90s
11.20 Mountain Men 7
PM
12.15 Lone Star Restoration
1.10 The Pickers 12
2.05 Pawn Stars 18
2.35 Forged In Fire 5
3.30 Mountain Men 7
4.25 The Untold Story Of The 90s
6.15 Swamp People 8
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
8.05 Storage Wars: Miami
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 The Pickers 9
9.55 Counting Cars 7
10.50 History Drama: Vikings 5
11.45 The Curse Of Oak Island 4

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
10.00 Making A Model With Yolanda Hadid
11.00 Atlanta Plastic
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 7
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 He Loves Me
3.35 The Rap Game 3
4.30 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2
7.00 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol
8.00 Leah Remini: Scientology & The Aftermath
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 The Bling Ring
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
10.00 True Detective 3 (NC16)
11.00 Crashing 3 (NC16)
11.30 Baywatch (NC16)
PM
1.30 Justice League
3.25 The HBO Movie Show
3.55 Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens
6.10 Puss In Boots (2011)
7.40 Wonder Woman
10.00 True Detective 3 (NC16)
11.00 Crashing 3 (NC16)
11.30 High Maintenance 3 (M18)
AM
12.00 Catch Me If You Can

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
9.45 The Hitcher 2: I've Been Waiting
11.20 Rock Of Ages (NC16)

PM
1.25 Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace
3.40 The Leisure Class
5.10 Smokey And The Bandit 2
6.50 The HBO Movie Show
7.15 Catwoman
9.00 Strike Back 6 (NC16)
10.00 The Godfather (NC16)
AM
12.55 The Perfect Storm

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 4 (HD)
11.15 Hunan 2018-2019 Countdown Concert (HD)
PM
4.30 StarHub Night Of Stars (HD)
7.00 2019 Super Star (HD)
AM
1.00 Love Concert (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
8.00 Snooker: 2018 World Open Finals Highlights
11.30 Tennis: Davis Cup By BNP Paribas Qualifier Round: Germany Vs Hungary: Day 1
PM
5.00 Tennis: Davis Cup By BNP Paribas Qualifier Round: Germany Vs Hungary: Day 2
AM
12.00 ISU European Figure Skating Championships: Women's Short Programme

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
9.00 Football: EFL Championships 2018 Matchday 30: Preston North End Vs Derby County
11.00 Fiba World Basketball
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
PM
12.00 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series Round 4 Sydney: Matches 1 To 4
1.30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series Round 4 Sydney: Matches 5 To 8
3.00 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series Round 4 Sydney: Matches 9 To 12
4.30 Magazine: The Pioneer
5.30 National Basketball League Round 16: Melbourne United Vs New Zealand Breakers
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
9.00 Football: Coppa Italia Highlights
9.30 Asean Basketball League: Singapore Slingers Vs CLS Knights Indonesia
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
AM
12.00 Football: EFL Championships 2018 Matchday 30: Sheffield United Vs Bolton Wanderers

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Running Man Animation
9.00 Teen Titans Go!
10.00 We Bare Bears
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Ben 10
1.00 Steven Universe
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 Adventure Time
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Craig Of The Creek
6.00 Teen Titans Go!
7.00 Adventure Time
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 MacGyver 2
6.50 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
7.40 Team Ninja Warrior
9.25 MacGyver 2
10.20 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 3
11.15 MacGyver 3
PM
12.05 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
1.00 Quantico 3
1.55 Team Ninja Warrior
2.50 Seal Team 2
3.45 MacGyver 2
4.40 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
5.30 American Ninja Warrior 8
6.20 Instinct
7.15 Hawaii Five-0 9
8.05 The Replacement Killers
9.45 Hawaii Five-0 9
10.40 MacGyver 3
11.35 Vantage Point

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 The Carbonaro Effect
6.50 Major Crimes 5
7.35 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
8.25 Supergirl 2
9.10 The Flash 3
10.00 The Carbonaro Effect
10.50 Almost Genius
11.40 Lights Out
PM
1.10 The Big Bang Theory 9
1.35 Friends 9
2.00 The Carbonaro Effect
2.50 Almost Genius

3.40 The Flash 3
4.30 Supergirl 2
5.15 Major Crimes 5
6.00 The Flash 3
6.50 Friends 9
7.15 Wonder Boy
9.00 The Legend Of Tarzan
11.00 The Man From U.N.C.L.E.

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.55 Just For Laughs Gags 14
7.20 Mr Bean
7.50 Most Ridiculous
8.25 Amazingness
8.40 Mr Bean
9.10 Caraoke Showdown
9.35 Just For Laughs Gags 14
10.00 Hot In Cleveland
10.50 Mr Bean
11.20 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.10 The Daily Show 24
12.35 The Muppets All-Star Comedy Gala
1.45 The Comedy Jam
2.35 Saturday Night Live 43
3.25 The Burn With Jeff Ross 2
3.45 Jeff Ross Presents Roast Battle
4.35 Lip Sync Battle 4
5.25 Mr Bean
5.55 Inside Comedy 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.55 Your Face Or Mine 3
7.20 Above Average Presents
7.25 Amazingness
7.50 Above Average Presents
7.55 Billy On The Street 5
8.25 Above Average Presents
8.30 Most Ridiculous
9.00 Caraoke Showdown
9.25 Above Average Presents
9.30 Lip Sync Battle 4
9.55 Above Average Presents
10.00 Stand-up, Asia! 2
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer 2
10.55 Above Average Presents
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 Above Average Presents
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
6.00 Taste Of Love
7.00 First Love
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 Mei-Fong's Cooking Show – Chinese New Year Special 2019
2.00 2019 Taichung New Year Show
6.30 The Golden Melodies 2018
8.00 Stylish Man Chinese New Year Special 2019
9.00 Super Nightclub
10.30 Oh, Pretty Woman

Film company gives up promoting Serenity

LOS ANGELES • After the admittedly delightful experience of watching the critical dud Serenity, viewers were left with a number of questions, but most importantly, why did two Academy Award winners – Anne Hathaway and Matthew McConaughey – agree to star in this movie?

In response to a report that Hathaway, McConaughey and director Steven Knight were upset with Aviron Pictures for pretty much giving up on marketing Serenity, the independent distributor issued a statement to Deadline blaming the lack of promotion on poor reviews and box-office numbers – a bold move, given that companies generally stay mum on such matters.

“As much as we love this film and still hope it finds its audience, we tested and retested the film – with audiences and critics alike – and sadly, the data demonstrated that the film was not going to be able to perform at our initial expectations, so we adjusted our budget and marketing tactics accordingly,” Aviron stated, adding that it would not have made “prudent business sense” to pour more money into a project that received a 23 per cent on Rotten Tomatoes and a D+ CinemaScore.

Serenity, which is billed as a neo-noir thriller, follows Baker Dill (McConaughey), a fishing boat captain hunting a single elusive tuna off a Caribbean-esque island called Plymouth. He lives alone and drinks rum straight from a World’s Greatest Dad mug, which is how you know he has family issues.

And here struts Karen (Hathaway), Baker’s ex-wife and the mother of his son, who asks the captain whether he will take her abusive husband (Jason Clarke) out fishing and throw him overboard.

One critic referred to Serenity as two different movies “oddly pressed together, like a grilled roach and cheese sandwich”. Another noted that the stars “share a mesmerising anti-chemistry, not only implausible as lovers but as occupants of the same dimension”.

According to Deadline’s sources, Hathaway and McConaughey had agreed to a full campaign, “including a junket and as many late-night and daytime talk shows as would have them” when Aviron agreed to promotion and advertising “commensurate with a 2,500-screen release”.

While the stars held up their end of the bargain, the article states that, after dillydallying, Aviron executives admitted there would be no such spending for the film, right before the actors hopped on a plane to the Los Angeles press junket.

Serenity made US\$4.4 million (\$\$6 million) on its opening weekend and, as Aviron noted in its statement, it is “next to impossible for an adult-skewing drama” to overcome such terrible reviews.

WASHINGTON POST

Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway star in Serenity, which has received poor reviews. PHOTO: AVIRON PICTURES



Young Bowie too ‘amateur’ for BBC

LONDON • A new documentary about the late British rock star David Bowie reveals judges at an early audition considered him “amateur-sounding” and “devoid of personality”.

Producers of the film David Bowie: Finding Fame trawled the BBC’s archives to unearth the scathing written verdicts from a 1965 “talent selection group” at the broadcaster.

The panel had reviewed a three-song audition by David Bowie And The Lower Third, one of many bands he featured in during his decade-long rise to fame in the 1960s.

“The singer is a cockney type, but not outstanding enough,” the judges wrote, using the term for an East London native, according to previews of the new film to air on British television this week.

“There is no entertainment in anything they do,” they added of the band.

“It’s just a group and very ordinary too, backing a singer devoid of personality.”

The 90-minute documentary is the final instalment in a trilogy about Bowie by film-maker Francis Whately.

It includes previously unseen photographs and interviews with Bowie’s friends, collaborators and lovers as he tried to kickstart his career in the early 1960s.

Researchers also found footage previously thought lost of the singer debuting his Ziggy Stardust persona – a film described by Whately as “a Holy Grail” for Bowie fans.

It was made a month before his seminal Starman performance on the BBC’s Top Of The Pops show in 1972, which is considered a watershed moment in musical history.

“It would fall apart if we played it, so it’s had to be very carefully restored,” Whately told Radio Times magazine, noting it may not be ready in time for inclusion in his documentary, which airs on Saturday.

Bowie, who died in 2016, eventually achieved stardom as a solo artist when he released Space Oddity in 1969. REUTERS

On social media



A LITTLE LION’S WELCOME: How do you welcome your father when he returns home for Chinese New Year? Actor Christopher Lee’s four-year-old son Zed donned a costume used in lion dance and waited for his father at Changi Airport. Lee, 47, was so amused by Zed’s cuteness that he was full of smiles and carried his son upon seeing him. He laughed heartily after he realised that he was so engrossed with his son that he neglected for a while his wife, actress Fann Wong, 48, who was also at the airport welcoming him back home. Little Zed seemed to enjoy himself as he performed a little lion dance after Lee put him back on the ground. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/FANNAIAIWONG

Grammy task force to tackle gender inequality in music

NEW YORK • The institution behind the Grammys announced its first major step aimed at tackling gender inequality in music, launching a plan to expand opportunities for women producers and engineers.

The Recording Academy initiative calls on artists to include at least two women in the pool of candidates they hire from, saying “the music industry is at a crossroads and progress won’t happen on its own”.

“There is no magic bullet to shift a status quo that has existed for centuries, but we see this initiative as an important step,” said Ms Tina Tchen, chairman of the academy’s nascent Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion.

The task force was created last year in response to major backlash that the Grammys are consistently too male and too white. Just 2 per cent of music producers and 3 per cent of engineers and mixers working in popular music are women, according to a USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative study last year.

More than 200 artists, producers and other stakeholders, including Cardi B, Justin Bieber, Lady Gaga, Nicki Minaj, John Legend, Keith Urban and Pharrell Williams, have signed on to the new inclusion initiative, the academy said.

The announcement comes before this year’s edition of the Grammys is held on Sunday, which boasts a larger class of women nominees across the top awards after largely being snubbed a year ago.

In May, Mr Neil Portnow, head of the Recording Academy, which includes more than 13,000 music professionals, said he would step aside when his contract expires later this year, after sparking outrage by saying women artists should “step up”.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Japanese actor Hirofumi Arai arrested for sexual assault

Walter Sim
Japan Correspondent
In Tokyo

Award-winning Japanese actor Hirofumi Arai (right) was last Friday arrested on suspicions of sexual assault.

The prolific 40-year-old, who made his on-screen debut in 2001 and won the Japan Academy Prize for Best Supporting Actor in 2016 for the movie Hyakuen No Koi (Hundred Yen Love), is accused of sexually assaulting an outcall masseuse in her 30s on July 1 last year.

Arai, who was reportedly drunk at the time of the incident, had called the woman to his residence in Tokyo’s Setagaya Ward, near Shibuya, at about 2.30am.

She filed a police report on the same day, Japanese media reports said, and investigations culminated in a search of Arai’s residence last Friday.



to have told the police.

Arai was born in Hirosaki city in northern Aomori Prefecture in 1979 and made his debut in the award-winning Isao Yukisada film Go in 2001.

He is a lead actor in the upcoming movie Taifu Kazoku (Typhoon Family), which is slated for release in June.

The production firm said it has not made any decision on the release of the movie.

However, BS Fuji Television said it will cancel a television programme starring Arai that was slated to air on Sunday.

Arai has not issued a public statement on his arrest.

In response to Arai’s arrest, his management company Anore said in a statement issued to the Japanese media: “While we have not been able to confirm the detailed facts, it is deeply regrettable that such a situation has occurred.

“We would like to profoundly apologise to the victim and all concerned parties.”

Stan Lee honoured in Hollywood

LOS ANGELES • Comic book giant Stan Lee (right), who dreamed up such pop culture icons as Spider-Man, Iron Man, the Hulk, the Black Panther and countless others, has been honoured in Hollywood by hundreds of fans and celebrities.

Lee, who died in November at age 95, saw his ink-on-paper, pulp comic characters grow into movie money-makers. He famously made cameo appearances in just about all of them, and as a writer and editor, he was key to the ascension of Marvel into a comic book titan in the 1960s.

American film director Kevin

Smith, best known for the movies Clerk (1994) and Chasing Amy (1997), and the television programme Comic Book Men, hosted the tribute at the TCL Chinese Theatre.

“His like is never going to pass this way ever again and I’m not just talking about the sheer professionalism of his output. Think about the entire universe of characters he created. That’s not going to be duplicated ever again,” Smith told Reuters.

Actor Wesley Snipes, who played the Marvel Comics’ character Blade, said: “He’s an inspiration for all of us creative artists to remind us

your creativity is never wasted and sooner or later you hang in there long enough, I don’t know, a movie theatre, a hologram, AR, VR, something will come along and the whole world will see your magic.”

Taboo, from The Black Eyed Peas, who created a comic book with Lee, praised the late creator’s career.

“There’s only a couple of figures in the history of entertainment and storytelling that have been as iconic as Stan Lee – Jim Henson, Walt Disney, Stan Lee.

“That’s just how it was,” he said. REUTERS

